



Interview

Mike "Daarken" Lim



Articles

Sketchbook of JAlex Andreyev



The Gallery

Chase Stone, Robh Ruppel
and Yang Xueguo, plus more!

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Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting Magazine
Issue 049 January 2010

MONSTERS & FANTASY SCENES

READ THE TECHNIQUES USED BY THIS MONTH'S FEATURED INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS IN OUR BRAND NEW TUTORIAL SERIES.

New!! Painting Monsters

Matt Dixon shows us his techniques on how to approach monster design in the first chapter of our new tutorial series.

Zombie Attack!

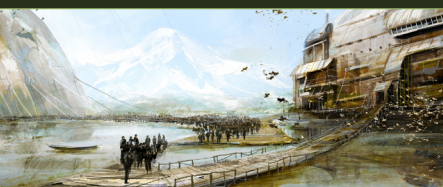
In the second chapter of our Painting the Undead tutorial series, **Richard Tilbury** takes on another formidable foe, the walking dead.

New!!! Painting Fantasy Medieval Scenes

Ignacio Bazan Lazcano brings us the first chapter in our new tutorial series where he focuses on painting a medieval market scene.

Custom Brushes: Crowds/Flocks

Richard Tilbury brings us the final installment of our Custom Brushes series where he focuses on creating crowds and flock brushes.





Richard Tilbury (p.60). He walks us through the valuable skill of creating custom brushes for Photoshop, and in this edition we focus on the tricky task of creating a crowd. He also shows us how we can apply these techniques to tackle similar problems.

Richard Tilbury (p.66) continues his busy month with us as we continue our Painting the Undead series, and in this part we look at flesh eating Zombies! Richard takes us from the thumbnail stage right through to developing the concept. Be prepared though, you may just scare yourself!

We promised you new tutorials this year and we never fail to deliver, the first of which is Painting Monsters, and the first in the series will be dealt with by the one and only **Matt Dixon (p.74)**. We know how hard it can be coming up with the right monster for your environment, so Matt will start us off by showing us how to find your inspiration and use it to create the perfect monster for your scene, and this month we will start by looking at the jungle.

The second of our new tutorials comes from **Ignacio Bazan Lazcano (p.48)** and he starts our series on Painting Fantasy Medieval Scenes, in this month's issue he is looking at a Market place. Ignacio shows us how to build our medieval scene, filling it with different characters, and he also walks us through making some useful custom brushes that will make creating your scene much easier. He has also kindly donated these as a download with this issue.

We bring you an interview with the illustrator and concept artist **Mike Lim (p.08)** also known as **Daarken**. Mike tells us how he was approached by Wizards of the Coast, and how different doing freelance work is to working for the gaming industry.

This month's sketchbook comes from **Alex Andreyev (p.26)** and we get the rare chance to see into his imagination, as he tells us how he is inspired by his dreams.

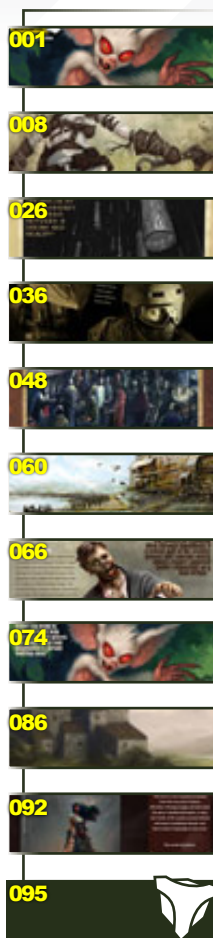
As if that wasn't enough already we also have a making of from **Andreas Rocha (p.86)** and a gallery that brings us images from **Robh Ruppel, Branko Bistrovic, Kirsi Salonen, Yang Xueguo** and many more.

Enjoy! **Ed.**

Editorial

Happy New Year, and welcome to the first 2DArtist of 2010, we hope you had a good year and that you're looking forward to an exciting year with 2DArtist. We pick up where we left off with two of our tutorials, but also have two new ones to get our teeth stuck into.

This month's issue sees the final installment of the custom brushes tutorial, and we bring the series to a close with



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Image by Mike "Daarken" Lim



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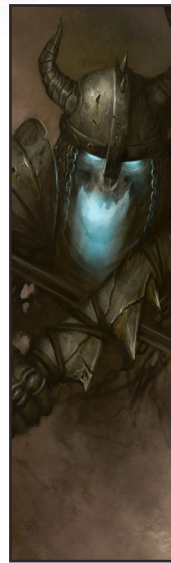
Contributing Artists

Every month many artists around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: simon@3dtotal.com



Alex Andreyev

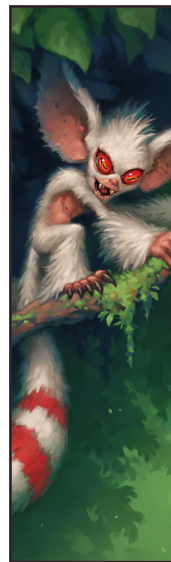
I'm a digital artist living in St-Petersburg, Russia. I've been drawing, painting and doing graphic design for the last 20 years now. Most of my pictures are inspired by my dreams or boundary conditions between a dream and a reality, and also by Karlos Kastenada's books. I work as an art director in advertising and movie production and have just finished the basic part of the work on the animated movie, Kin-Dza-Dza. I'm now searching for new and interesting projects!
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Daarken

After graduating from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco with a BFA in traditional illustration, Daarken began his career by freelancing with several game companies, such as Wizards of the Coast, Fantasy Flight Games, Widescreen Games, Digital Extremes, and Upperdeck. He now works for EA Mythic as a concept artist for the game, Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning.

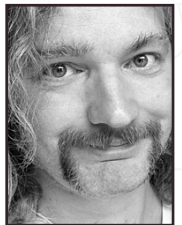
www.daarken.com/
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Matt Dixon

A freelance illustrator and concept artist based in the UK – check out his website for further information:

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mail@mattdixon.co.uk

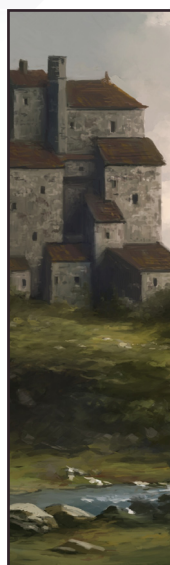


Dust | Image © Chase Stone



Ignacio Bazan Lazcano

Lives in the beautiful city of Buenos Aires where he's been working for four years in the games industry as an illustrator and concept artist. He currently works for TimeGate Studios where his tasks include developing the aesthetics of the game right from the very beginning – what he'd call, "pre-production". In the future he'd like for Argentina to become well-known for its artistic talent, where he can learn – and teach – amongst the best. www.neisbeis.deviantart.com/
i.bazanlazcano@gmail.com



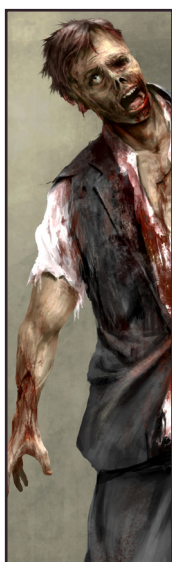
Andreas Rocha

A 2D freelance artist from Lisbon/Portugal, specializing in environments, be it matte painting or conceptual artwork. He studied architecture at college, but quickly found that his true love was for digital painting. His work includes concepts for games, album/book covers, matte paintings for advertising, and editorial illustrations, amongst others.
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Richard Tilbury

Has had a passion for drawing since being a couple of feet tall. He studied fine art and was eventually led into the realm of computers several years ago. His brushes have slowly been dissolving in white spirit since the late 90s, and now his graphics tablet has become their successor. He still sketches regularly and balances his time between 2D & 3D – although drawing will always be closest to his heart.
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Would You Like to Contribute to 3DCreative or 2DArtist Magazine?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, "making of" writers, and more. For more information, please send examples of your work, or a link to your online portfolio, to:
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Floating 2 | Image by Robh Ruppel

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Mike Lim, otherwise known as "Daarken", is a talented illustrator and concept artist, well known within the digital community for his fantasy work. He has been working successfully as a freelance artist since leaving university with clients including Fantasy Flight Games, Wizards of the Coast and Mythic Entertainment.

"Creating art is a constant learning experience and one that I hope will never come to an end"



DAARKEN

AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE LIM

Interview with Mike Lim

Could you begin by telling us a little about your background and the path you have trodden to get where you are now?

Sure, my name is Daarken and I grew up in a sleepy little Texas town where tumbleweeds and horses were aplenty. After attending the University of Texas at Austin for a year for computer programming I finally realized I didn't want to write code for the rest of my life. As a child I had always enjoyed carefully creating master copies of various comic book covers in pen and ink. The titles I drifted towards were of characters that had a mask of some sort: Spawn, Spider-Man, The Darkness, and anything else that I could get my hands on. The reason for this was because I couldn't draw faces... at all. Instead of facing (lol) the problem head-on, I just avoided them. It took several years before I was able to draw a decent face. Anyway, after I decided to become an artist, I



moved to San Francisco to attend the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. In 2004 I graduated Cum Laude with a BFA in traditional illustration. Three months later I received two phone calls: one from Fantasy Flight Games

and one from Wizards of the Coast. I have no idea how either of them found out about me; I probably should have asked. I will never forget my conversation with Wizards of the Coast. This is basically how it went:



WOTC: Would you be interested in doing some work for us?

Me: Yes!

WOTC: You don't even know what the project is yet. Don't you need to know more about it before you agree?

Yeah, I was a little green back then [Laughs]. Since then I have been freelancing non-stop. In 2007 I received an email from Mythic Entertainment wanting me to work on the game *Warhammer Online: Age of Reckoning*. A few weeks later I flew out for an interview and I have been with Mythic ever since.

It is great to have such prominent clients headhunting you. For anyone unfamiliar with these names what role do Fantasy Flight Games and Wizards of the Coast assume in relation to concept art and how easy / difficult has freelancing been since?

Well, most of my freelance work deals with illustrations as opposed to concepts. The work I do for Fantasy Flight Games and Wizards





DAARZEN

of the Coast has to do with collectible card game illustrations, book illustrations, cover illustrations, things of that nature. There are always advantages and disadvantages between freelancing and having a staff position. On one hand freelance gives you the freedom to have an open schedule, but the cheques are sporadic and you don't get any benefits that come with a staff position. Another thing that most people don't realize is that you have to pay estimated taxes if you are a freelance artist, so be sure to save 30-40% of each paycheck for taxes. Finding freelance work hasn't been hard for me, luckily I have a constant flow of clients to keep me busy.

How would you describe the development of your work over the last few years and what do you feel have been the key advances you have made as an artist?

I feel that I have improved tremendously over the past several years. I can't even stand to look at the work I was doing 3-4 years ago. I'm not really sure why anyone hired me back then. Working at Mythic has really helped me push my ability to resolve my images in more detail. Back when I first started my paintings were extremely loose. I think a big part of it was due to laziness.



"...one of the key things to remember when creating believable concepts for subjects that do not exist is to base them on things found in the real world"

My paintings have also progressed in terms of color use and contrast. I basically coined the name "Daarken" because my paintings were very dark. Not necessarily dark in nature, but dark in terms of contrast. Most of my paintings

were barely even visible; I can't believe my art directors let me get away with some of those paintings. Something else that I have been working on lately is pushing my compositions and incorporating more environments and backgrounds into my paintings. I am so used to working on very small print-sized illustrations, like *Magic: The Gathering* and *World of Warcraft*, that I tend to leave fairly vague and simple backgrounds so that the characters will read better. Creating art is a constant learning experience and one that I hope will never come to an end.

As a concept artist you are expected to create convincing images and designs that convey a certain sense of realism and plausibility, yet often focus on subject matter that does not exist. How, as an artist, do you regularly tackle this problem and what do you feel are the key principals involved?

I think one of the key things to remember when creating believable concepts for subjects that do not exist is to base them on things found in





the real world. Using the real world as reference can give your concepts that little sliver of realism that will push them from being something silly to something that is tangible. Another important aspect of concept design is the details. Little details can be an important factor in portraying a real object as opposed to a clearly made up one. For example, when I am designing armor I try and figure out how the armor is put together.





I think about where the straps should go that hold the pieces together, or where the rivets should go. Thinking about these things will translate in your concept and give people the feeling that it could actually work.

"One of the pitfalls that novice concept artists run into is they don't realize they have to work within the limitations of the available technology."

What have been the main differences and considerations you have had to take on board within the games sector compared to previous commissions?

First and foremost, as a concept artist your job is to envision what the art director wants and be able to execute a painting that is clear and precise so that the modeler can build it. In illustration work you can let light and shadow hide much of your painting; when doing concepts you can't do that. One of the pitfalls that novice concept artists run into is they don't realize they have to work within the limitations of the available technology. If you create some crazy outfit for a character you have to keep in mind that this design is going to have to work in the game itself. If the model can't support dangly bits hanging off the character, then you probably shouldn't spend time painting them in your concept. Is the clothing you designed going to cause a lot of clipping problems with the model? Are you going to cause problems by designing a character that is wearing heels when none of the current models are built to support that feature? These are all things you have to keep in the back of your head.

Your professional work and much of your portfolio fits within the genre of Fantasy. What do you feel are the most challenging aspects of working within such a popular genre and the main pitfalls that await the aspiring novice? Probably the most challenging thing about working in the fantasy genre is making something that doesn't exist believable. There









are a lot of people out there that tend to go a little too crazy when working in the fantasy genre, and thus end up with something that looks silly instead of something that could actually exist. Sure you want to come up with something that is new and unique, but you need to base things on reality. If you are trying to design a creature, look to nature for inspiration.

"The computer is just a tool; it won't teach you how to become a good artist"

I notice that you have a fine art and life drawing section on your website. How do you regard these disciplines compared to your digital work and do they form an integral part of your illustration and concept work?

Being able to draw and paint traditionally is extremely important for an artist. When I attended the Academy of Art University I learned how to paint traditionally before I learned how to paint digitally. You need to have strong foundations before branching off into the digital realm. All of the fundamentals you learn while painting traditionally can be applied to the digital media. The computer is just a tool, it won't teach



you how to become a good artist and it won't do the work for you. There is no all powerful filter that will make your illustration perfect; that is one of the things that many people fail to realize.

Who or what would you cite as your main influences and source of inspiration?

There are so many artists that have inspired

"I gave up on trying to find a style a long time ago"

or influenced me over the years. Some of the old masters that I look to are people like Sargent, Leyendecker, Cornwell, and William Bouguereau. Contemporary artists include Brom, Kekai Kotaki, Jon Foster, Todd Lockwood, Aleksy Briclot, Daryl Mandryk, and Justin Sweet. I always try to not be too influenced by another person's style. Early in my career I had a problem with looking too much like other artists. From one painting to another you could tell who I was looking at for inspiration at the time. I think I was so worried about trying to find a style that I ended up just looking like everyone else instead of just focusing on creating a good illustration. Style will come with time, it isn't something that you should force or intentionally go out and look for.

Style is a word one hears a lot and is something many seem to strive for, but what meaning does it have for you and do you think it is possible to develop a unique style?

I gave up on trying to find a style a long time ago. Most of the time an artist's style will come to them on its own. I just try to paint to the best





of my ability, and if a style comes out of it, then I consider it a bonus. I personally don't think I have a recognizable style, but that is just me. Usually a unique style is a mishmash of other people's styles; a brush stroke from one artist, a color palette from another, you get the idea. Every so often a truly unique style will pop up, but within a few months or years you will see 50 artists with that same style.

From seeing your time lapse movies and tutorials it appears you have a very intuitive and fluid approach to your work. Do you find that your approach and the freedom of working digitally generates its own momentum and a dynamic that helps suggest a direction and therefore fuels the creative process, as opposed to drawing on paper beforehand?

Yeah, I think that working digitally gives you the freedom to explore more possibilities. It allows you to try things you would normally be too afraid to try with traditional media, but at the same time one could fall into the trap of repainting something so many times that you end up losing the initial punch of your sketch. I actually wish I had the time and dedication that the traditional artists do to plan out my illustration beforehand. Since I don't do any preliminary drawings or roughs I waste a lot of time trying to figure out the poses and composition as I am painting the final. On the other hand you end up with a lot of happy accidents when working digitally without any preconceived ideas.

And finally; if you were faced with a fearsome army and were forced to fight, which of your characters would you like by your side and why? Probably a daemonette. Nothing like having a half naked girl to distract the enemy while she eviscerates them!

Mike “Daarken” Lim

For more work by this artist please visit:

<http://www.daarken.com>

Or contact them at:

daarkenart@daarken.com

Interviewed by: Richard Tilbury







ANIMATION & VISUAL EFFECTS IN 2009

A VFS RETROSPECTIVE

2009 represents a special milestone for graduates of Vancouver Film School's Animation & Visual Effects programs.

They contributed to 9 of the 10 highest grossing films of the year. For 10 straight weeks during this summer's blockbuster season, audiences saw their talents on the big screen. Dozens worked on *Invictus* and *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian*, and 20 more served on the long-anticipated *Watchmen*.

Then there was *District 9*. Over 40 alumni – including Director-Writer Neill Blomkamp and Visual Effects Executive Producer Shawn Walsh – crafted this sci-fi masterpiece. The release of James Cameron's *Avatar* capped the year in style, with a number of grads working to achieve a new standard in feature film animation.

For stories, interviews, and highlights, visit vfs.com/highlights.

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SKETCHBOOK OF ALEX ANDREYEV

There was excitement all around at 2DArtist when we stumbled across Alex Andreyev's portfolio – his surreal concepts are truly inspiring and help you to step out of the mundane and into a new world where dogs race around with meat grinders for heads, and lampposts become the tails of unknown creatures. His images make you believe that the bizarre truly exists, and that around every corner is a whole other world just waiting to be discovered. So take a look for yourself! We have a selection of sketches created for the animated film, Kin-Dza-Dza, as well as a fantastic concept called "Meat Grinder", but please go on to also check out Alex's online portfolio for further inspiration, as this is one fantastic mind that we can't help but be intrigued by, and we're sure it'll offer plenty of inspiration for all! Grab a cuppa, sit back, and enjoy...

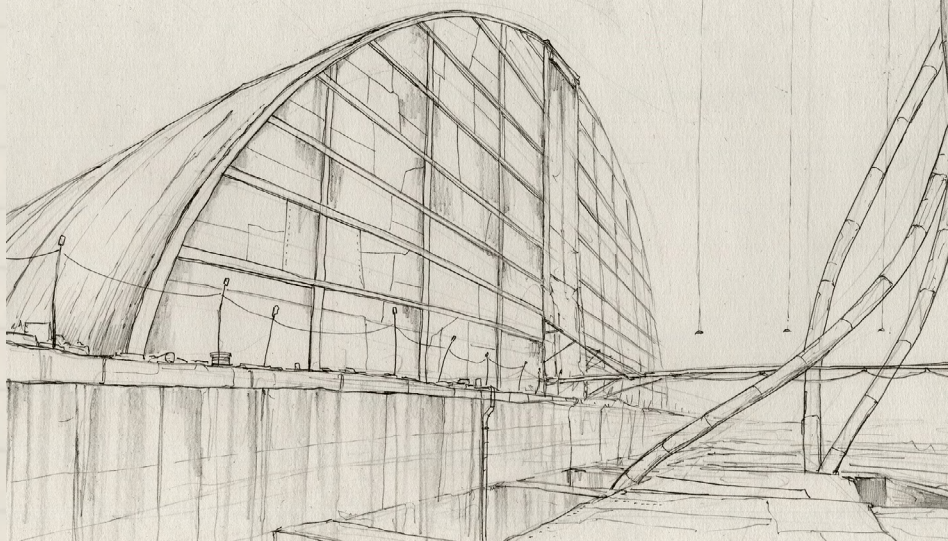
SKETCHBOOK BY ALEX ANDREYEV

Hello, I'm an artist living in Saint-Petersburg and I've been drawing, painting and doing graphic design for the last 20 years now. I'm currently creating concept art for the animated movie, *Kin-Dza-Dza*.

I've tried out various techniques, including traditional inks, pens, brushes... I've also experimented with digital art, and now use Photoshop and Painter all the time – just brushes though, no effects or filters. By using a limited toolset I am able to achieve a consistent style throughout my portfolio.

I focus more on the expression of my creative concepts than on the technology or tools I'm using. I am free of the limitations of traditional tools, such as waiting for oil paints to dry, changing gouache color or etching line widths; I am able to constantly see and control the final result of my work during its creation – and this suits my style.

So with regards to the concept art for the *Kin-Dza-Dza* animated movie, the film action occurs on a planet called, "Pluk". It's a desert-



like planet where high-tech civilization has gone through full cultural collapse: the style of the buildings, gadgets, vehicles – it's negligent, careless, and everything looks as though it's made out of scrap.

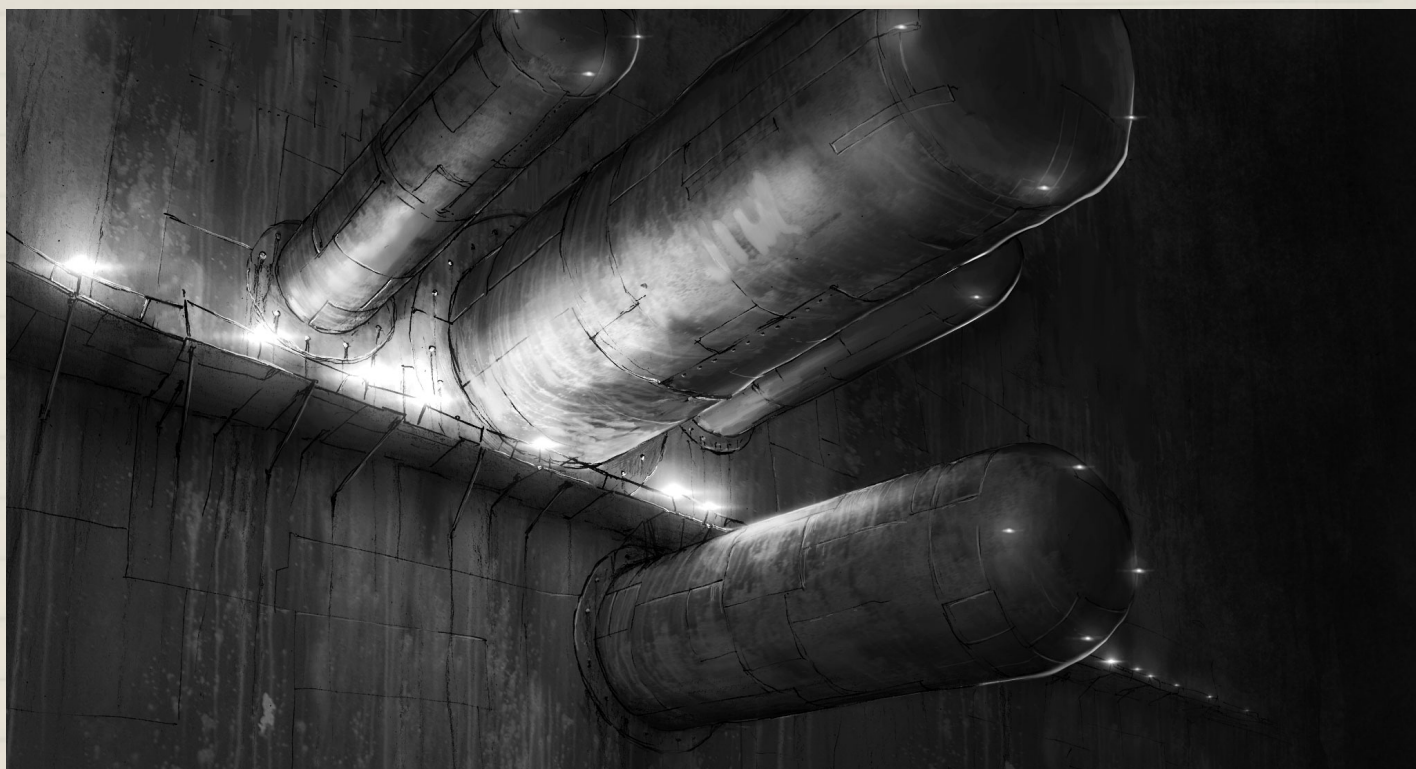
I've used just one method when creating concept art for this movie. In the first stage I make a pencil drawing, which I then scan and take into Photoshop. I set the canvas to 2048 by 1107 pixels using the Multiply layer blending mode for the sketch layer. I fill the background with the basic color of the composition. I then create a new layer between the pencil drawing and the background onto which I set the

atmosphere with a simple brush (hard edged with Opacity Jitter controlled by Pen Pressure). I keep painting, adding more of the finer details. In a layer above the pencil drawing I then create patches of light and flashes. And finally I impose textures onto the image, adding a sense of realness, using the Overlay blending mode – usually rusty metal textures.

Here are some examples from the concept art I've created for *Kin-Dza-Dza*:

01 – Part of an interior of the central underground city of the planet. The capital is a huge ship, with one half of it sitting under

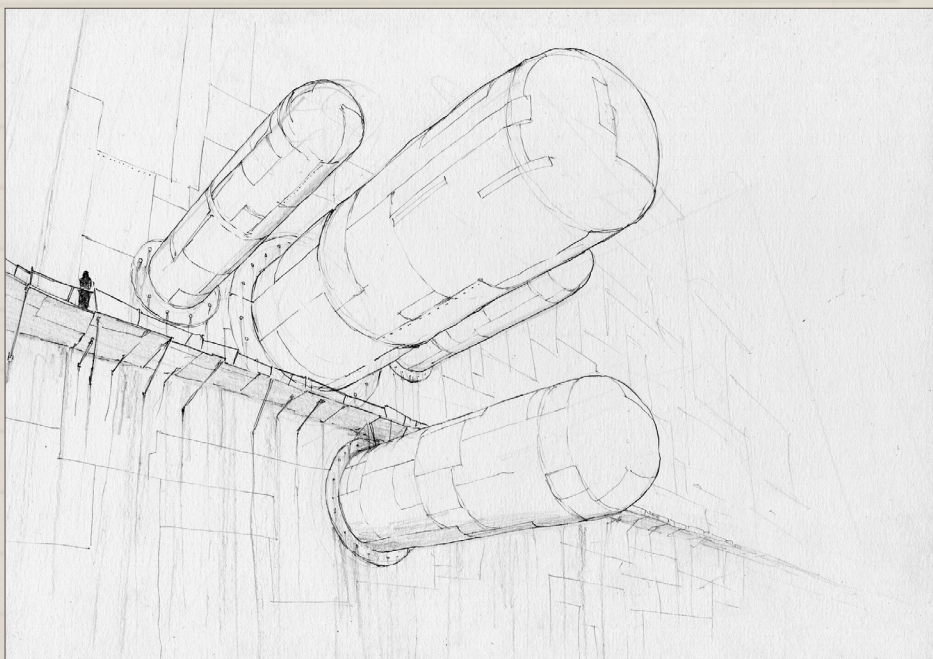




the ground, and the other half sticking out above a precipice. Inside there are buildings, constructions, highways and lots of empty space.

Here it is dark; lanterns shine only on small areas.

02 – The wall of an underground room with gallery. When I draw fragments of an interior I usually don't think of the purpose of the details and subjects. It's impossible to provide everything! So I simply try to make the elements of an interior look convincing, and



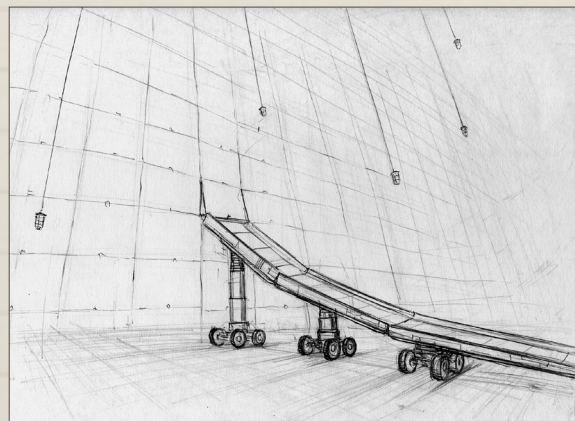
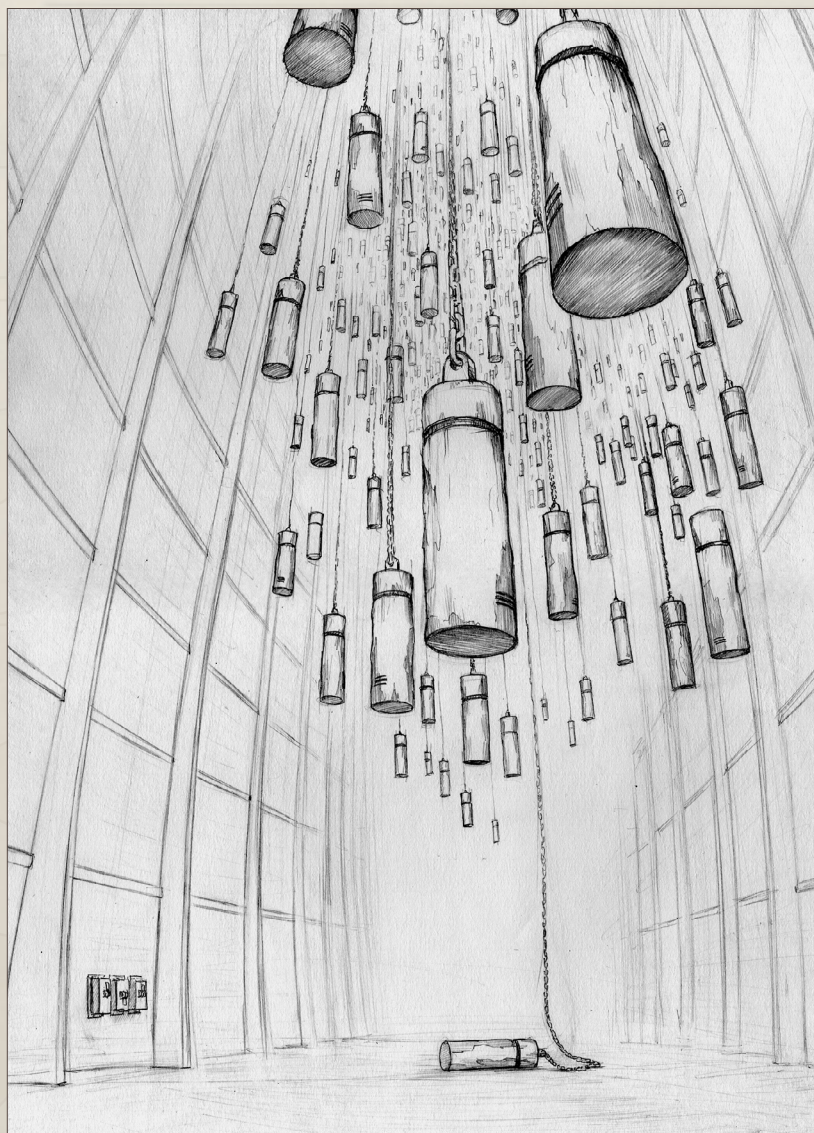
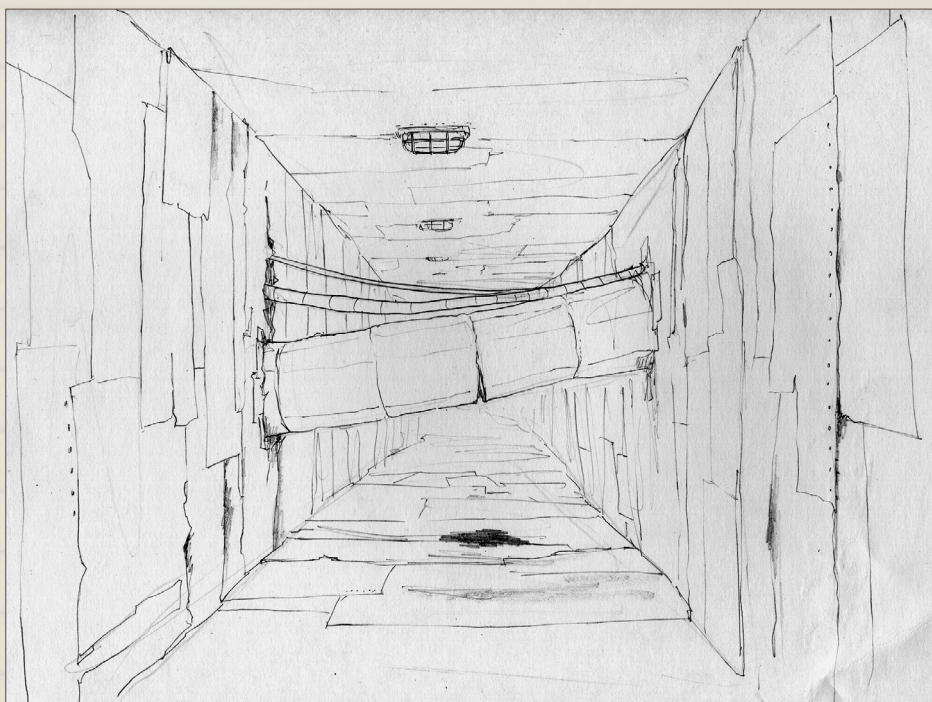
support the general style and atmosphere of the film, for example. I don't know the purpose of the tanks in this image – they could be used for anything!

03 – An office. Advanced technologies on this planet are combined with more primitive, rough ones. So there can be antigravitational machines as well as somewhat more unsophisticated devices!

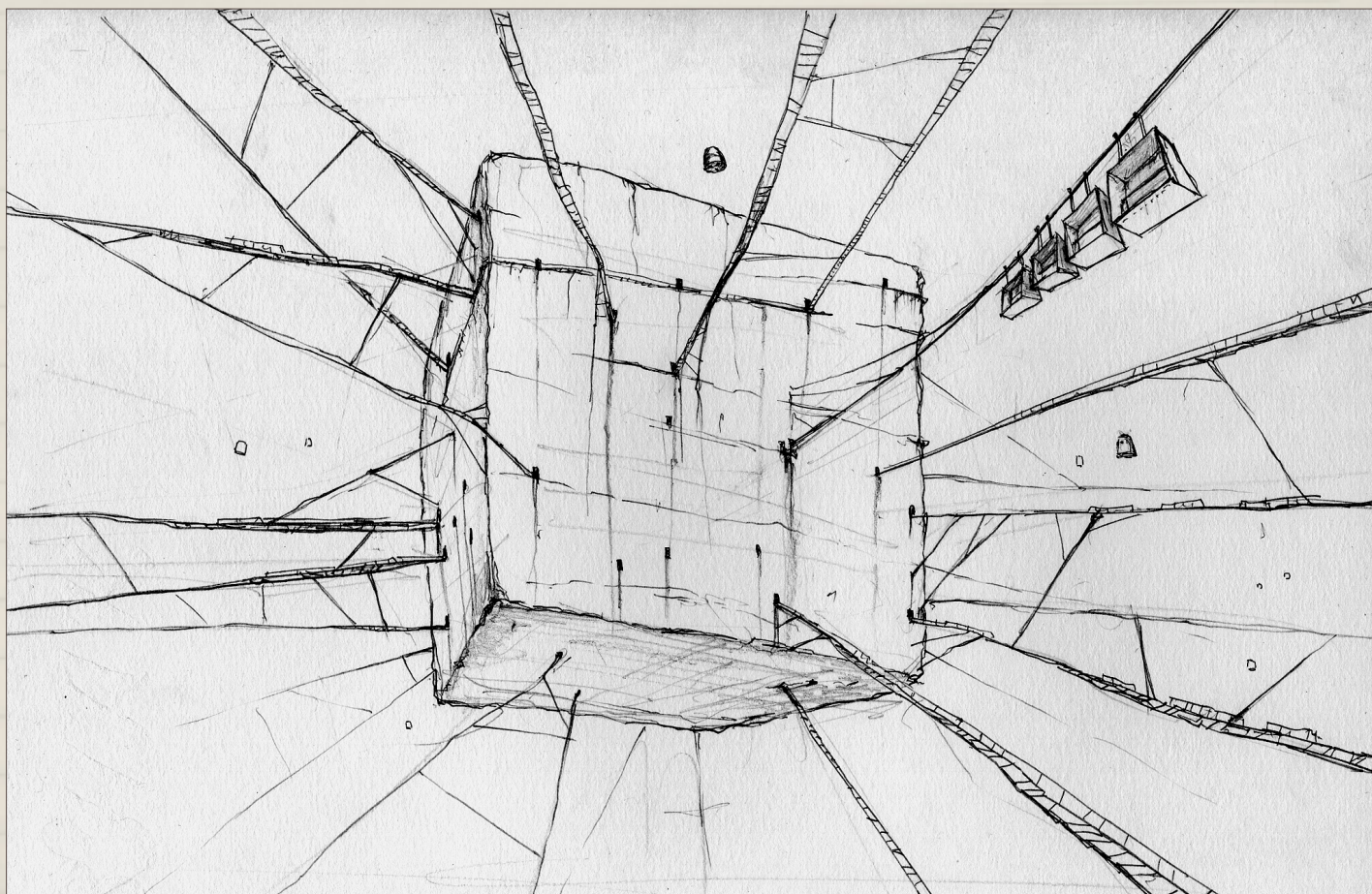
04 – A corridor. All interiors and landscapes of this planet should be a little bit absurd, illogical. For example, to go through this corridor, people must bend down and crawl under a pipe...

05 – This one is a prison with hanging containers for prisoners – the so-called “ezich”. There was a task for me to create an unusual prison. It had to be slightly absurd. I thought up these hanging containers: prisoners are held in containers, and as required, the containers can fall and open. The buttons for the management of these are on the wall.

06 – A variant of the prison with containers in the wall. Prisoners are contained in a huge wall case. I thought up this idea when I looked at photos of a mortuary.

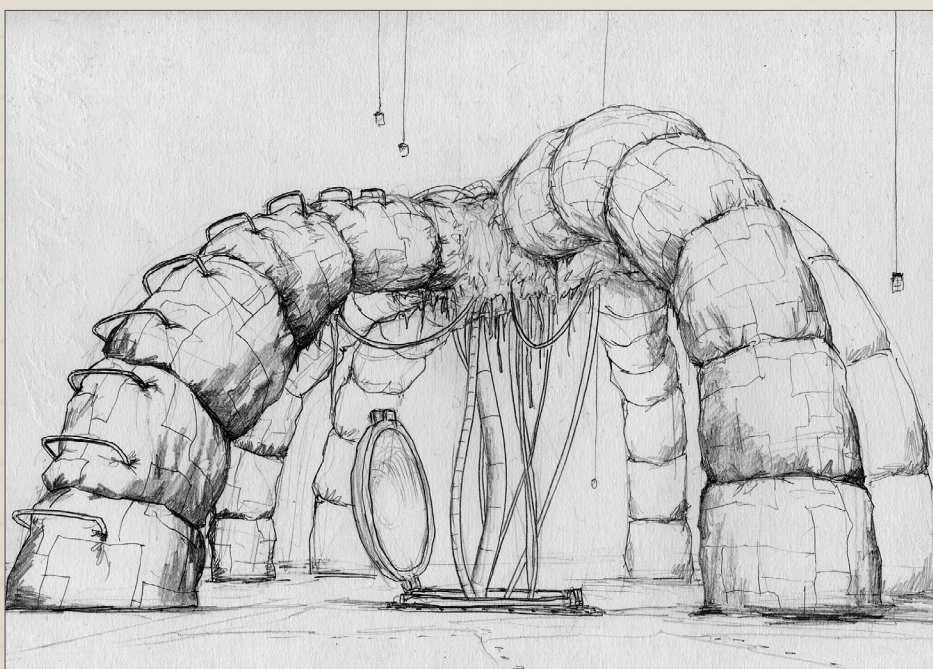
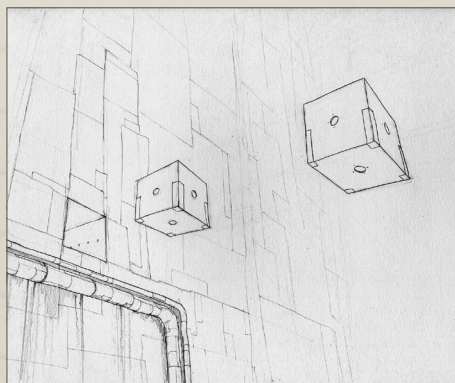


07 – A gallery and hoses, through which air is continuously pumped by thousands of inhabitants into the huge sphere set over the city. It is part of the culture of the planet, or part of religion. In the film, this is not given any explanation.



08 – A “planetarium” in the city. This is a separate construction hanging inside of city, and here you can receive information about any planet! Lots of transport highways are directed to this building. I worked out that this building should have its own form, differing from all the others. In this case, it took the form of a cube.

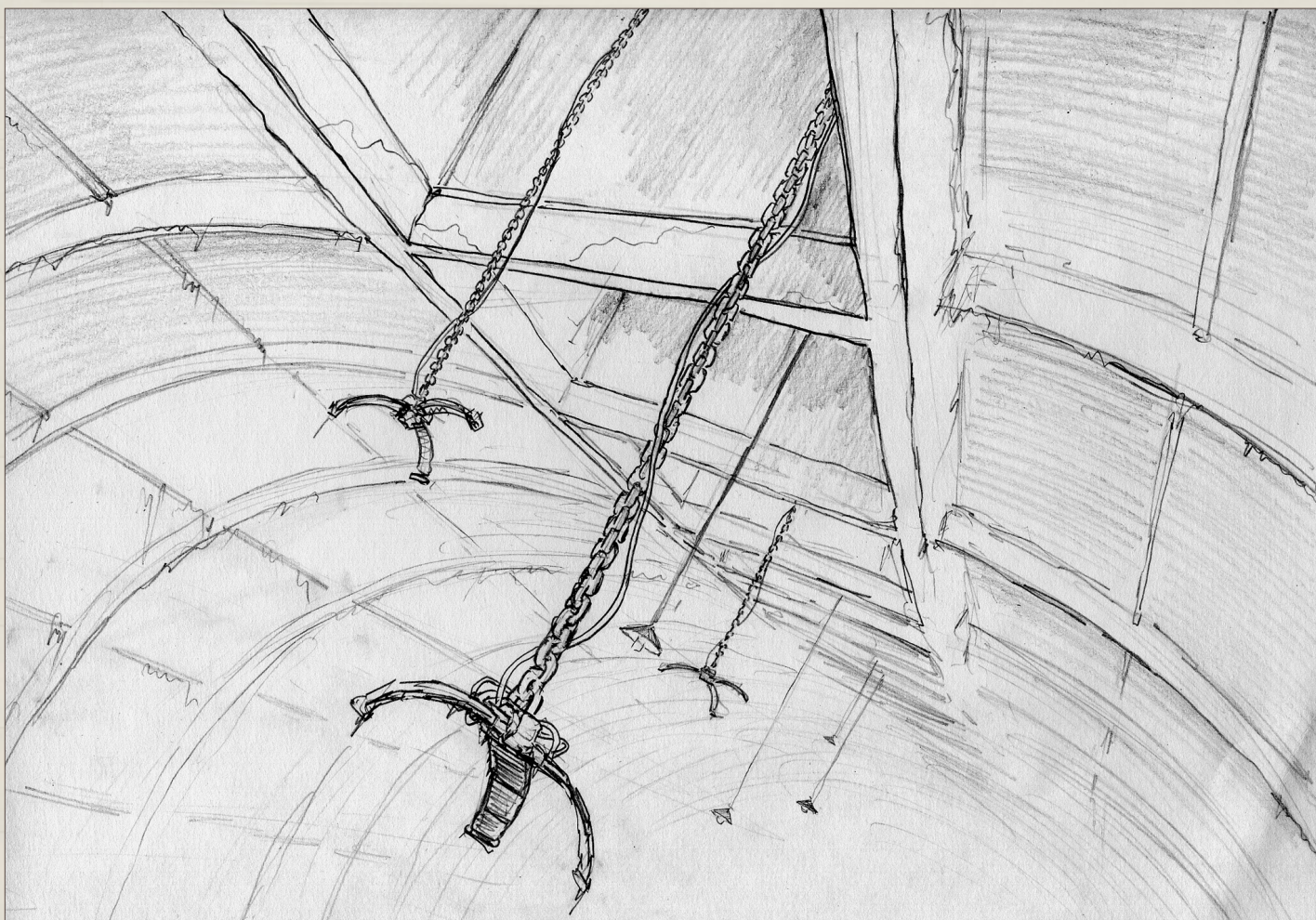
09 – I’m not too sure about this one – it’s probably the unit of a sewer system. I wanted to draw something similar to a system of sewer pipes – something biological, like a section of intestines.



10 – The governmental “tuple”. Vehicles of the government look less damaged than all the others, and take a more precise form. They will suddenly appear from a wall of the city, fly over the crowds, and disappear into an opposite wall.

11 – A system for catching stowaways.

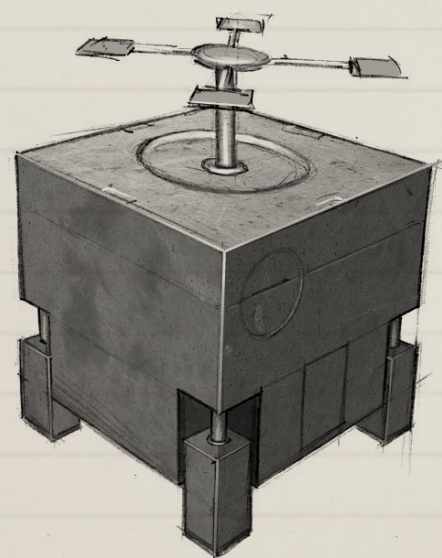
When the passenger sits down on a train, after payment their forehead is greased with an invisible ointment. When the train passes under the monitoring systems, gauges read out the information from the foreheads of



its passengers. Those who have not been smeared with the ointment are snatched out from the car by their heads, by these nasty claws!

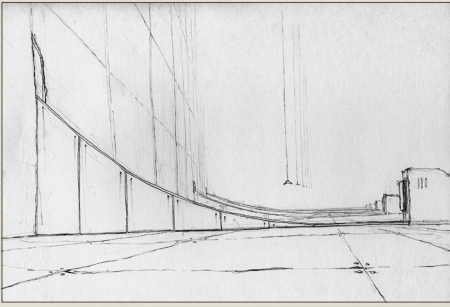
12 – This is one of the “pepelatz” (flying vehicles). Judging by this one’s rather good state, it belongs to an important inhabitant

of the planet. When the device stands on the ground, four rectangular corner supports are set down. When it rises, the supports retract back into the device. From above there is a rotating blade – which serves not for vertical lifting, but it is probably an aerial or something like that.



13 – One of numerous dumps on the planet – the resting place for various space engineering projects. The development of the civilization went through various stages in which devices to work on various new principles were created. Here I have tried to represent the old, destroyed photon rocket.

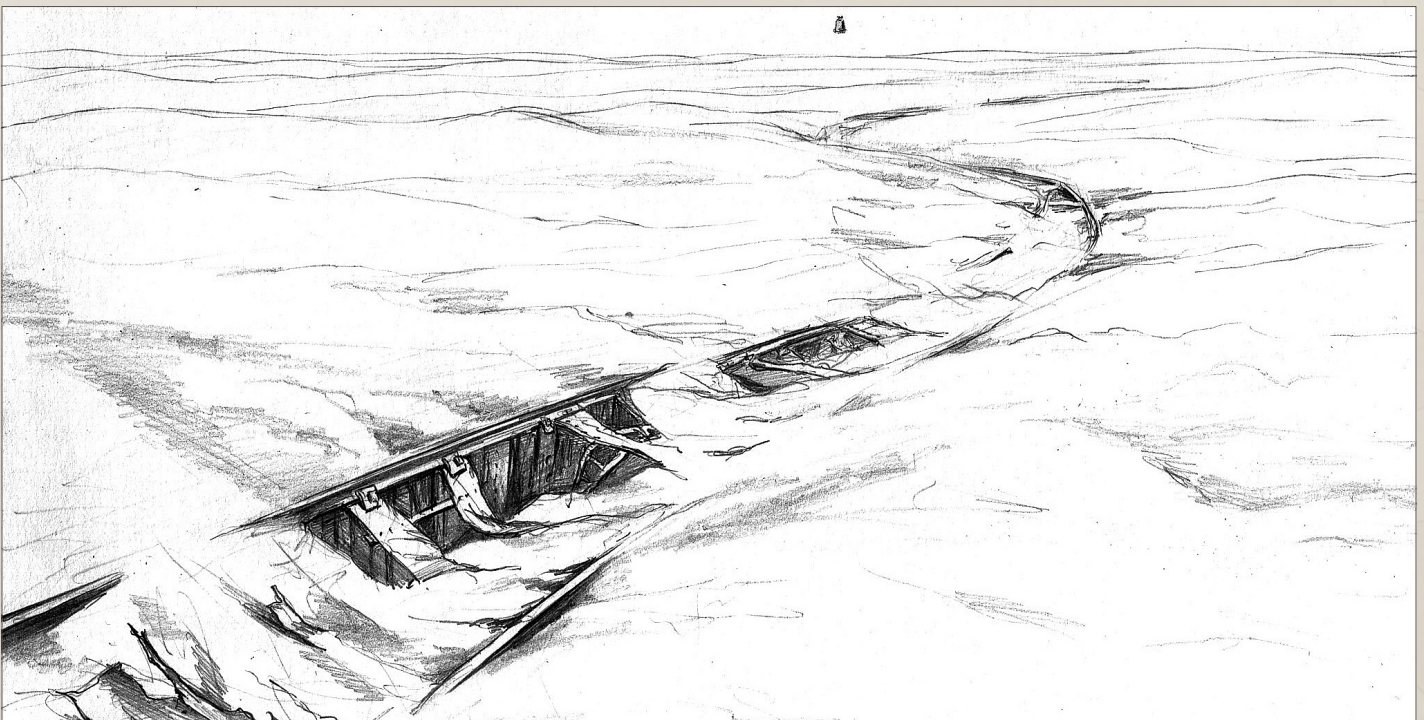
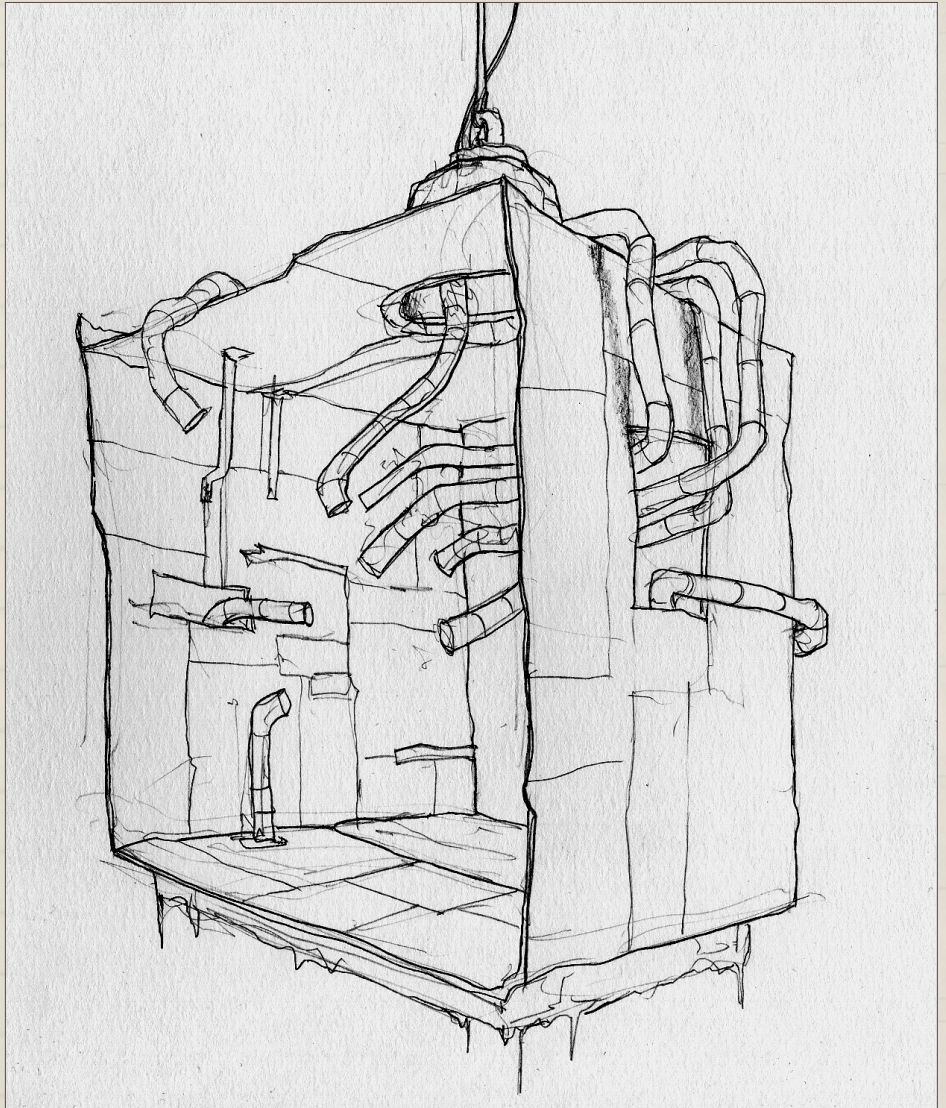




14 – Another variant on the prison. Prisoners are stored in a wall in containers on small wheels. As required, they are rolled out on an inclined surface until they hit that chipper-like device. When it's necessary to send the prisoner back, the piston beats the container and it goes back into the storehouse.

15 – This one is an elevator with a voice communication system. This elevator is suspended by a cable, and can move not only vertically, but also in horizontal directions, since it moves in the open space of the city. The police also use such elevators. To operate it, it works on voice commands, just like in the ancient ships.

16 – A disused railway. The railway lines will still shine where visible through the dust and dirt, even though they have been abandoned





and destroyed. Underneath them you can just make out beginnings of an underground city...

17 – A small village where the houses are constructed of old railway tanks. The houses are kept up high on stilts props preservation from sandstorms. Windows are small cut holes. One of the locals has built his house from an old boat; another has used a balloon.

18 – And finally, here is another vehicle – this time for public transport. It's a simple and open design where the locals can simply jump inside, even while it's moving, and hold onto the handle. Yes, it is a little bit dangerous!

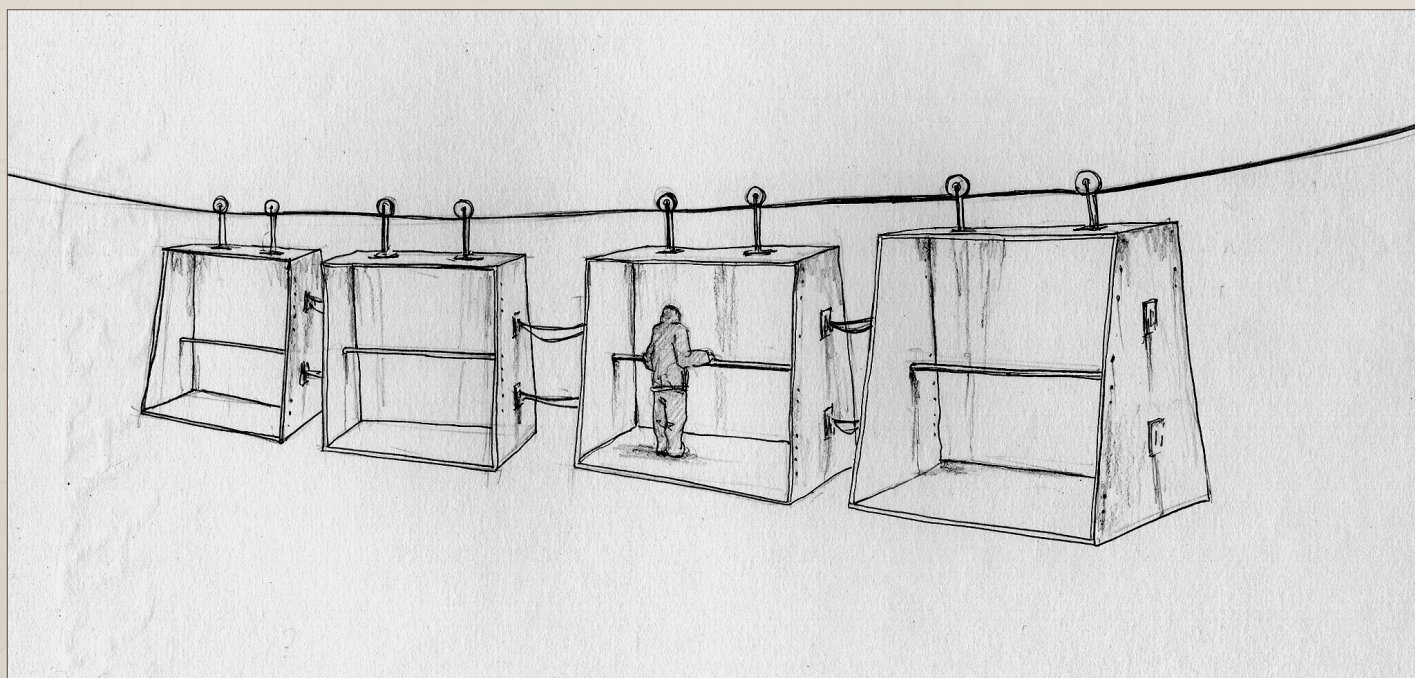


THE MEAT GRINDER

I'd like to finish off this sketchbook article with a concept I call the "Meat Grinder" (17). Most

of my pictures are inspired by my dreams or by the boundary conditions between a dream and reality (as well as by books by Karlos Kastaneda). If a scene amazes my imagination, it becomes a picture...

The Meat Grinder is one of such sketches. I can't explain why the dogs have blades in place of their heads – I've just "seen" it, and it amazed me. In the composition I have tried to show feelings of instability and danger. The



corridor looks a little bit unnatural: the walls, floor and ceiling are rough, bent, unreliable and changeable. These are the kind of places that surround our dreams.

To begin this concept I once again made a simple pencil drawing and scanned it. In Photoshop, I set the sketch layer to Multiply and created a new layer between the pencil drawing and background on which I set the tones. More details were added and lighting was established on a final layer on top of the others. And there we have it!

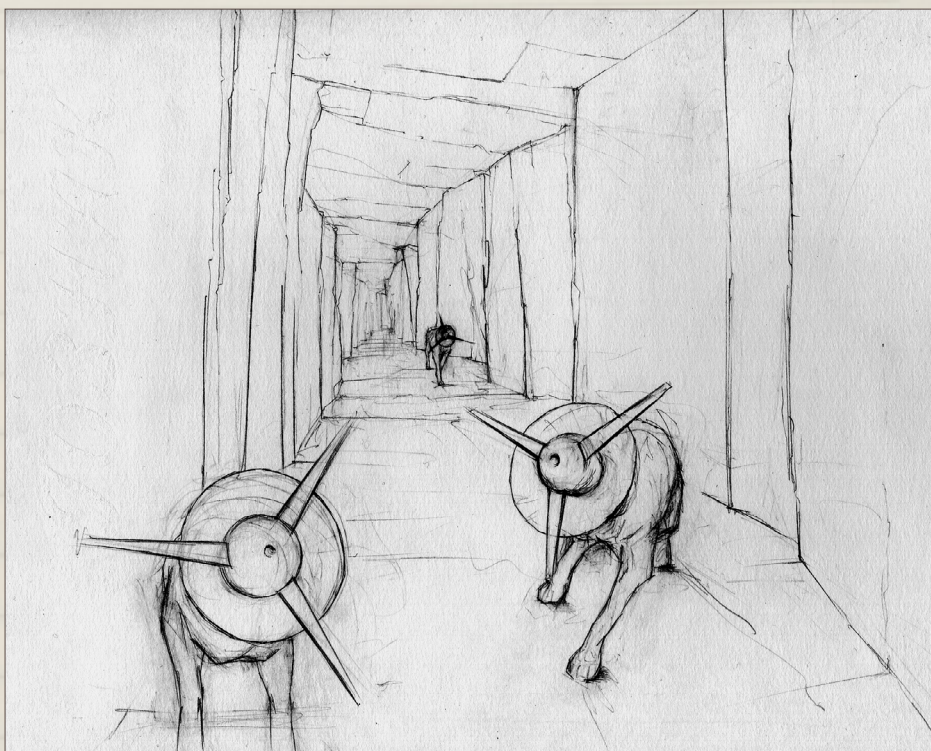
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The background of the entire page is a high-contrast, sepia-toned photograph of two soldiers in full tactical gear. The soldier in the upper left is standing, holding an assault rifle, wearing a helmet with goggles and a face mask. The soldier in the lower right is crouching, also in full gear, holding a rifle. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

THE GALLERY

This Month We Feature

Artwork From:

Rodrigo A. Branco

Jama Jurabaev

Hatice Bayramoglu

Kirsi Salonen

Robb Ruppel

Alex Andreyev

Andreas Rocha

Yang Xueguo

Branko Bistrovic

Chase Stone



Wasteland Beauty

Rodrigo A. Branco

<http://digitalinkmind.cgsociety.org/gallery/>

r.branco2d3d1977@gmail.com

Floating 2

Robh Ruppel

<http://www.robhruppel.com>

robhrr@yahoo.com



Robh





© Alex Andreyev

Late

Alex Andreyev

<http://www.alexandreev.com>

andreevbox@gmail.com

(Above)

Dragon's Lair

Andreas Rocha

<http://www.andreasrocha.com/>

rocha.andreas@gmail.com

(Below)



ARROCHA
2009

© Andreas Rocha

The bird sense in the mind

Hatice Bayramoglu

<http://www.3d2dizayn.com/>

3d2dizayn@gmail.com



Hatice Bayramoglu
2019



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Concrete 9

Yang Xueguo

<http://yangxueguo.cgsociety.org/gallery/>

blur1977@126.com

(Above)

Journey

Jama Jurabaev

<http://jamajurabaev.daportfolio.com>

<http://jamajurabaev.deviantart.com>

jama_art@tag.tj

(Left)



Image created for the "World of Ordera" book project:
www.facebook.com/pages/The-World-of-Ordera/183084870100

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Quickening at Saraste

Kirsi Salonen

<http://www.kirsisalonen.com/>

salonen.kirsi@gmail.com

(Above)

Demon's Grin

Branko Bistrovic

<http://branko.cgsociety.org/>

bisvic@gmail.com

(Below)



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Dust

Chase Stone

<http://www.chasesc2.deviantart.com>

chasesc2@gmail.com



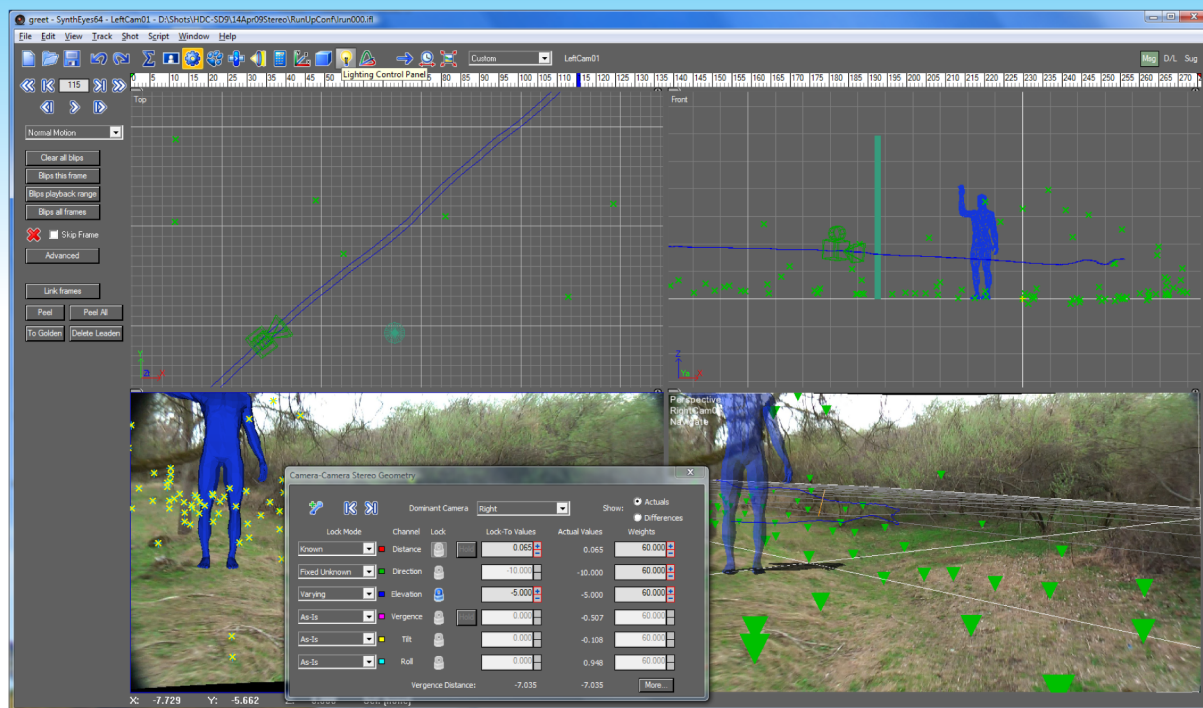




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Digital Painting Challenge

Our first digital painting challenge is to create characters, whether they are male, female, robots, monsters, steampunk or anything else they can be entered as long as they are well thought out and well presented.

The prizes are as follows:

1st Place - \$5000

2nd Place - \$3000

3rd Place - \$1,500

5 runners up \$500 each

“The first thing I imagine when thinking about this type of setting, is a place full of people from different social classes: knights, noblemen and merchants are altogether in a place filled with texture and color...”

PAINTING FANTASY MEDIEVAL SCENES



This series of tutorials will be split over six separate chapters, all sharing the common theme of a fantasy inspired medieval scene at its heart. Each will be undertaken by a different artist and draw upon a wealth of experience and skills perfected over years of industry practice. The authors will discuss their approach to digital /concept painting, the tools and brushes they employ and treat us to a valuable look into their artistic process. The six installments will cover a different environment each month based upon the above theme and encompass a multitude of professional tips and techniques.

The importance of researching topics through to sketching and exploring ideas will feature alongside methods used to build and refine detail. These will form an integral part of the series and through comparison we shall be afforded a comprehensive insight into the world of the digital artist.

- Chapter 1** | Market - This Month Jan 2010
- Chapter 2** | City on Stilts - Next Month Feb 2010
- Chapter 3** | Slums - Mar 2010
- Chapter 4** | Forest Location - Apr 2010
- Chapter 5** | Mountain City - May 2010
- Chapter 6** | Docks - Jun 2010

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Painting Fantasy Medieval Scenes Chapter 1: Market

Software Used: Photoshop

Today I'm taking on the task of drawing a medieval marketplace. The first thing I imagine when thinking about this type of setting, is a place full of people from different social classes: knights, noblemen and merchants are altogether in a place filled with texture and color, where there is smoke and several tents of different sizes and shapes. Perhaps it's even surrounded by stone walls and decorative elements, narrow roads or streets. I understand markets to be essentially social places where people gather for exchanging either things or ideas.

If you're drawing a marketplace, you can choose any viewpoint or approach; you can either draw in the foreground two people bartering or trading, or perhaps a child stealing some fruit from a stall – there are many potential stories to be told. The picture, or your point of view, will change depending on what choice you make here. If we think about it, the possibilities are truly endless! My choice is possibly the most complicated one: I'm choosing to show what happens in a marketplace as if we're looking it from an aerial perspective.



Fig.02



Fig.01

To start working on something like this, you need to use quick strokes to get the idea down, defining it step by step as you go. Measuring perspectives is necessary for making adequate structures. In this first instance, it really works to make quick sketches, without thinking too much about the anatomy of your painting (Fig.01).

Once you have an idea established, with regards to the objects and the location of the people in your scene, you can start defining and specifying your work more accurately. Amongst

many things, digital art allows you to gloss very easily over any black-and-white drawing that has been done. Another alternative is to color your work from the very beginning. This is the most traditional way of doing things, but you have to be very sure about the palette you are going to use when taking this approach. I'm going to do something in-between: define the objects and people in grey until I get what I'm searching for, and afterwards I'll gloss over in color (Fig.02).

The starting point will be a quite defined drawing to which you have put the first layer of color.

Blue is the selected one for me, which I apply to the base layer using the Ctrl + U command. Tick the Colorize option in the new window that has already opened up (**Fig.03**).

Look for the blue tone you want in the slider bar called "Hue", and with other options you will be able to adjust the color even more. You should now have a completely blue colored drawing which is ready to have the real color for each element applied over it (**Fig.04 – 05**).

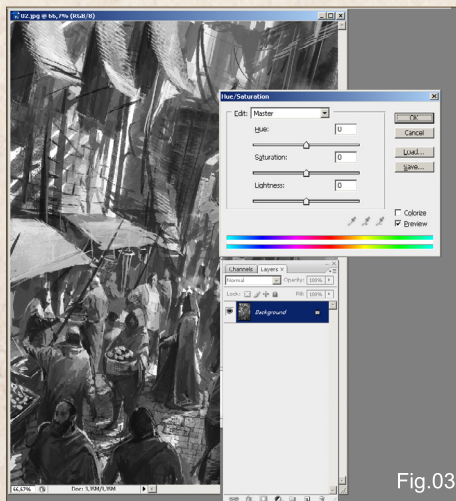


Fig.03

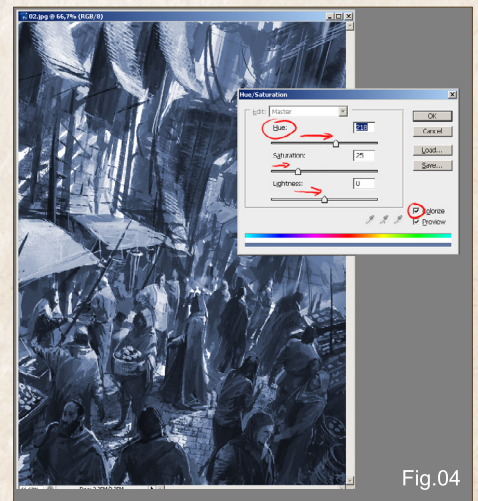


Fig.04



Fig.05

To color over the blue, let's create a new layer (Shift + Ctrl + N). Tick the Colorize option over the layers bar, and from now on you can paint with the colors you like (**Fig.06**).

Blue will be background color. I'm going to use it to shade all the elements included in the picture. My sketch is full of people and objects, so I'll try to use as many colors as I can to achieve variety in my composition. There are many characters that are becoming gradually defined: to the right there is a man that carries fruit in a basket; in the middle is a mysterious figure

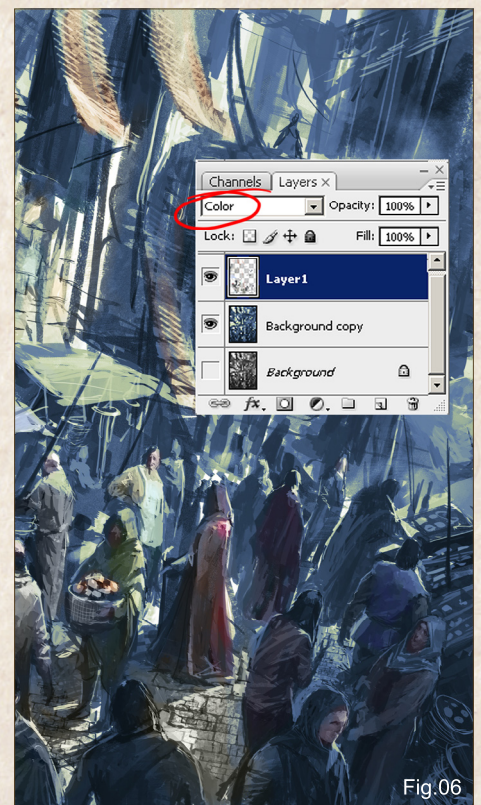


Fig.06

Painting Fantasy Medieval Scenes Chapter 1: Market

covered with a red cloak; above and below the picture you can see people from different social classes, moving upwards and downwards (Fig.07).

The second stage consists of giving basic color to each element and, at the same time, to go forth, tracing and polishing characters. The following one is to define contrasts better. There are different ways of getting it: marking the place where light comes from very well; and, at the same time, where dark and shade zones are placed; using warm and cold colors to separate elements (Fig.08).

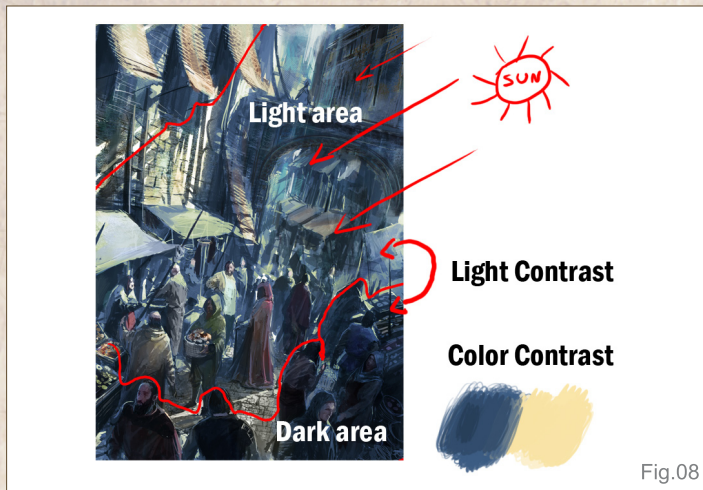


Fig.07

The drawing is becoming even clearer now (Fig.09). At this stage you must control the situation; that is to say, you have to adjust the whole picture at every moment. The control is yours!

The following is without any doubt the stage of adjustment and precision. Let's use the magnifier for details now, to make elements become clearer still. I usually use the Paintbrush at 78% Opacity for this. This gives me a certain degree of sensitivity and, at the same time, strong lines to define it better (Fig.10).



Fig.09



Fig.10

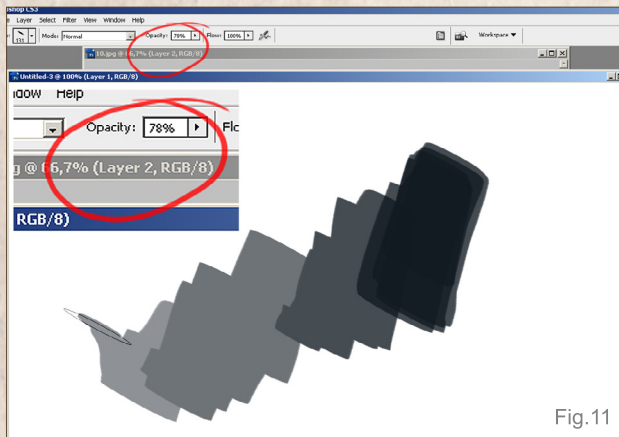


Fig.11

To explain what I'm saying, I'll now show you, from the very beginning, how I have colored the character who is dressed in a cloak and holding a cane (Fig.11).

What I want to get is the feeling that his cloak is made of pure velvet, something very luxurious. For the shadowed areas I use a basic blue; for color, I select an almost red rose color; and to brighten it I choose an orange. This way, I can move myself within the chromatic scale (Fig.12).

The trick with painting is to put your light and shade in the right places. If you are accurate with this, you can try to draw something realistic

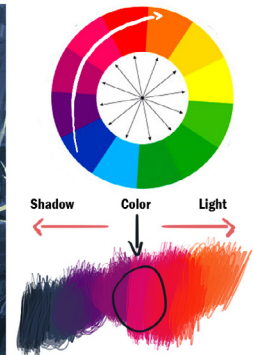
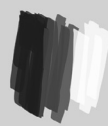
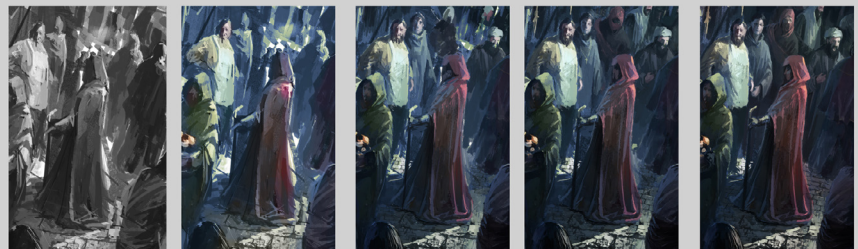
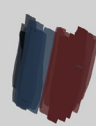


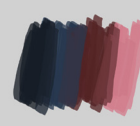
Fig.12



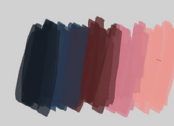
Grayscale



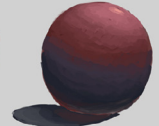
Color Base



Light & Contrast



Highlight



Detail & Light Reflection

Fig.13

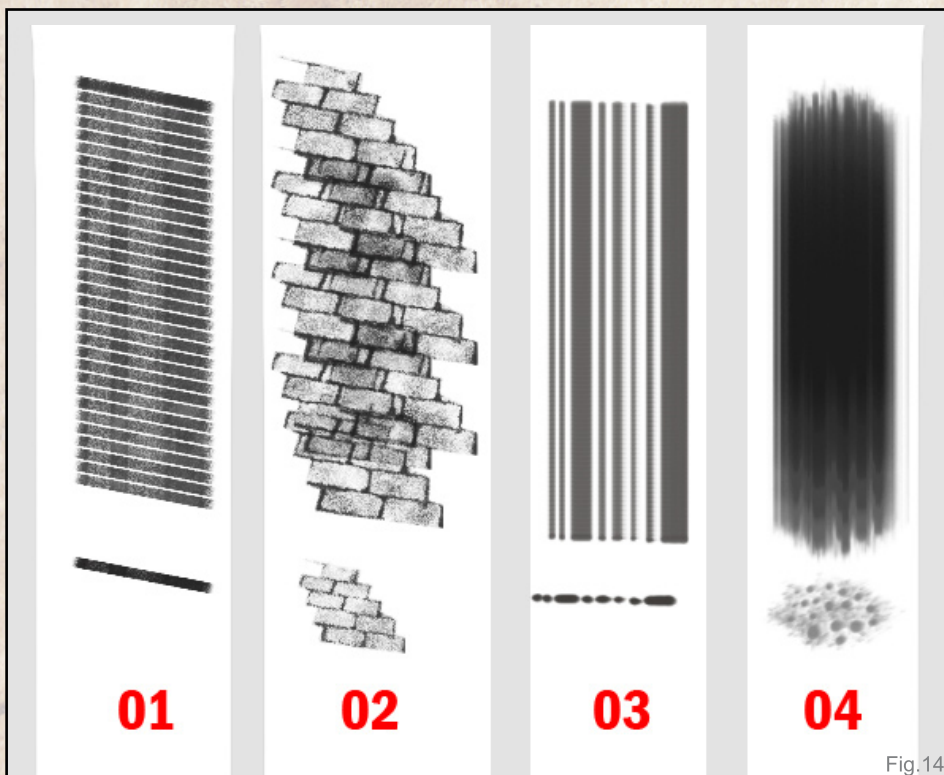


Fig.14

with very few brushstrokes. But this is quite difficult and you can only do it after observing and practicing hardly (Fig.13). I use the same procedure with the remaining elements of the picture.

With the painting done throughout the scene, and with all these details hanging around, it is fairly easy for us to imagine what kind of custom brushes we might need to make work easier for ourselves when it comes to finishing up with the detailing work. When I think about a marketplace I generally see stone, fabric textures, weave, ornaments, and so on.

So to make any kind of medieval scene you might imagine, I'm now going to take you through the process of creating four custom brushes to aid you on your way – they're all very easy to design and make (Fig.14).

Custom Brush No. 1

Select a default Photoshop Paintbrush and draw a line with different degrees of intensity to get an interesting texture (Fig.15).

Select this line with the Lasso Tool and then turn it into a paintbrush by going to Define Brush Preset and naming it. Now we've got a new paintbrush with interesting weft (Fig.16).

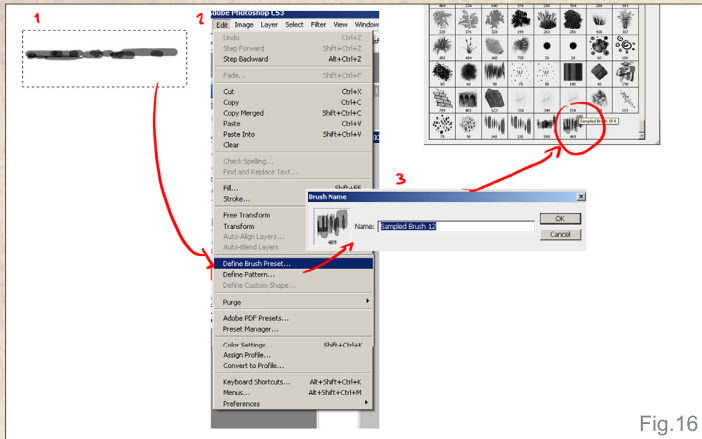


Fig.16

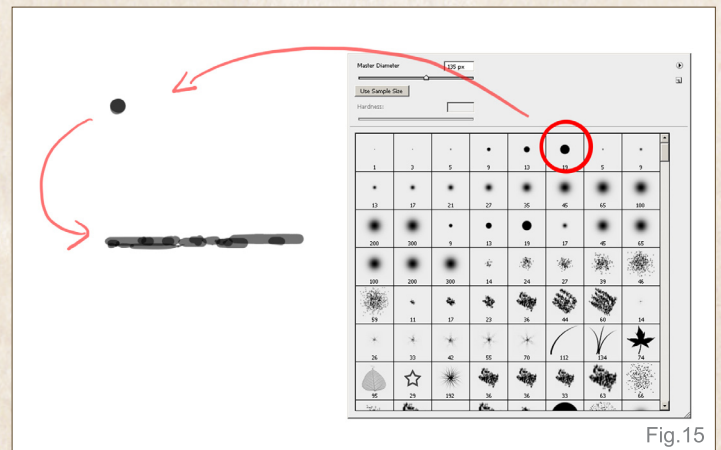


Fig.15

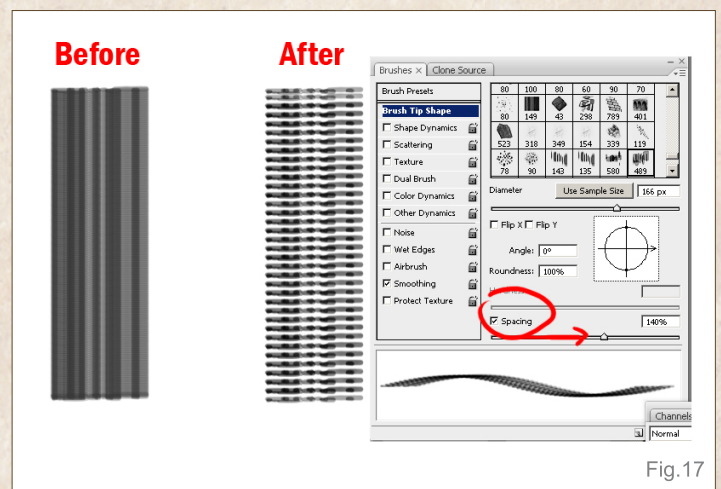


Fig.17

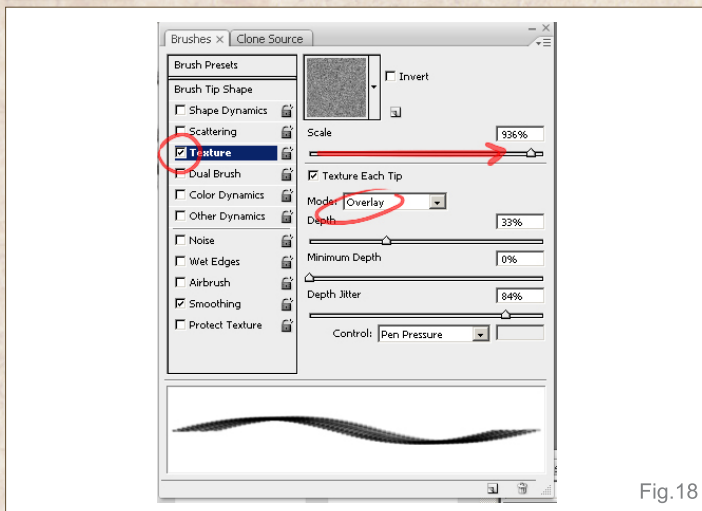


Fig.18

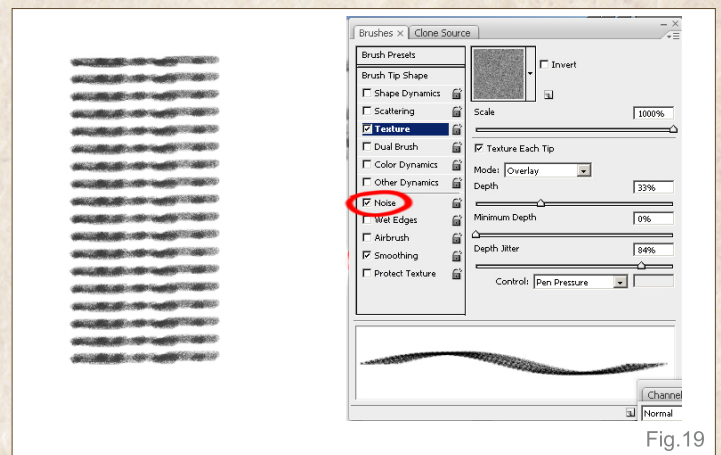


Fig.19



Fig.20

The following step is to retouch it to get the final paintbrush. Go to the Brushes menu. We're going to modify each brushstroke's distance, giving it 140% Spacing. From this, we'll get a staggered effect (Fig.17).

Next, tick the Texture option and scale it up to 1000%, selecting Overlay mode (Fig.18).

Finally, to give it a dirty texture, tick the Noise option (Fig.19).

Let's now see an example of how we can use this paintbrush in our painting (Fig.20).

Custom Brush No. 2

First of all, look for some photos where you can see bricks or stone. The idea is to create a paintbrush that will let us overlay the entire painting where stone, walls, and floors (etc.) can be found (Fig.21).

Go to the tool bar and select the Lasso Tool. Choose any form that allows you to get a tile, something that fits well when using it over and over on your canvas. Then define your brush (Fig.22) from the Brushes menu, and tick the Scattering option, setting it to 14%. This will let us repeat the texture several times within an adequate distance. The scattering can be regulated to keep the distance you wish.



Image source: <http://elblogderubencito.wordpress.com/page/2/> Fig.21

Select the Texture option: set 192% for Scale and 76% for Depth; tick the Noise option. Finally, select the Brush Tip Shape option and set Spacing to 63% (Fig.23).

You now should have an excellent paintbrush to decorate the walls and floors of your painting in a quick and easy fashion (Fig.24)!

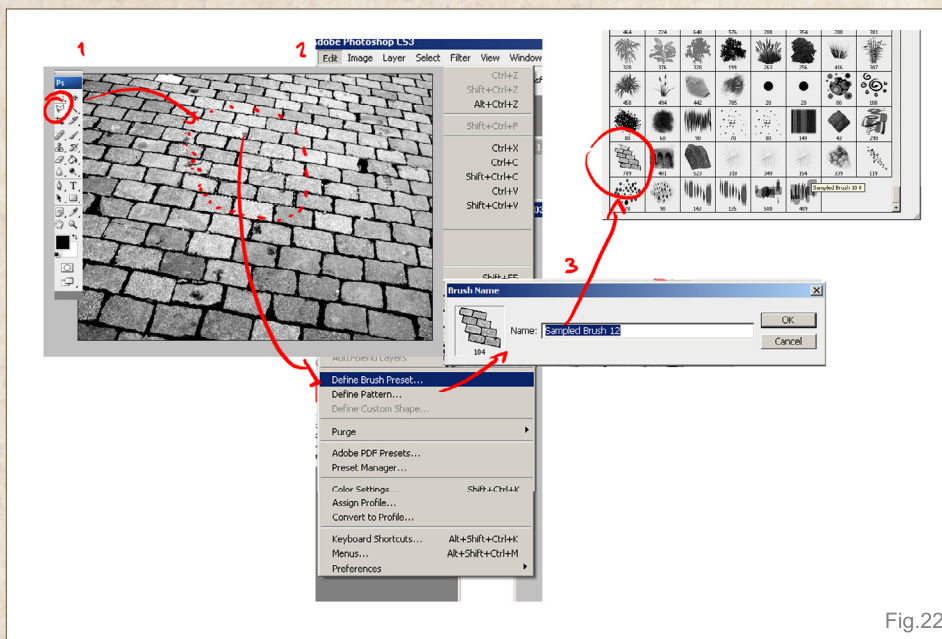


Fig.22

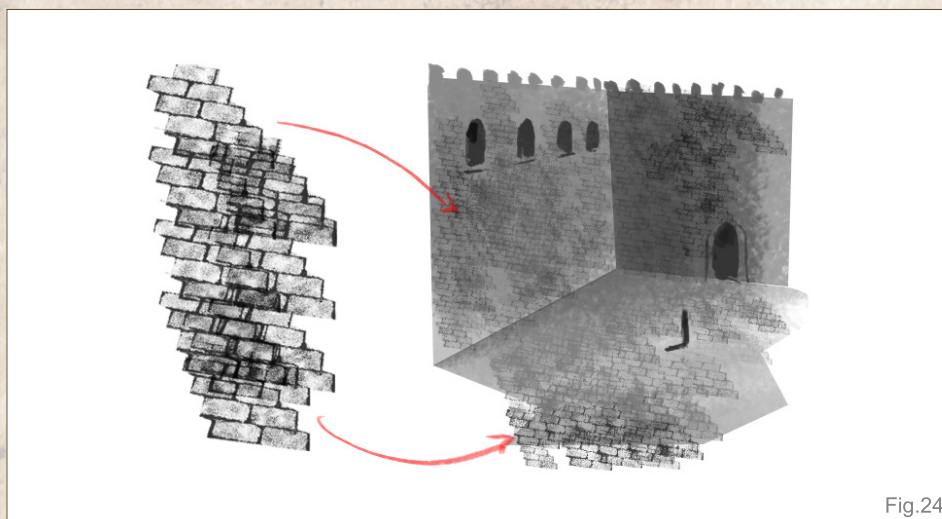


Fig.24

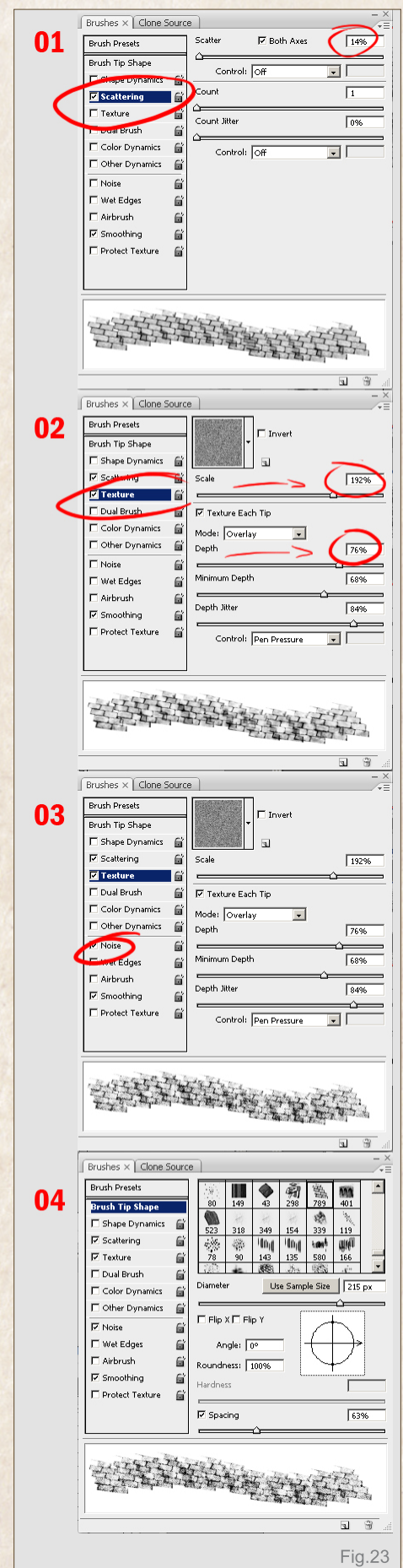


Fig.23

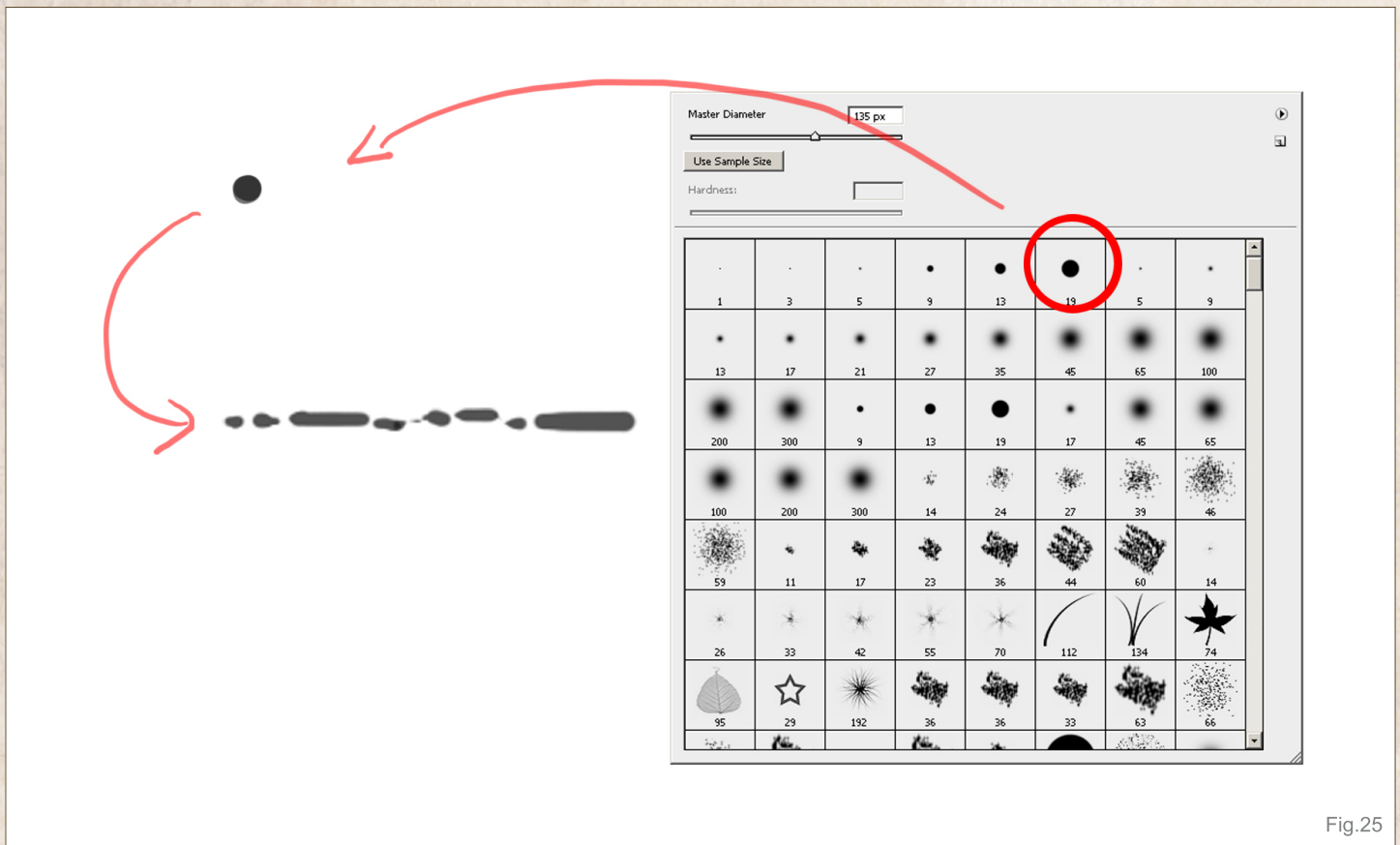


Fig.25

Custom Brush No. 3

Like in any medieval marketplace, we'd expect to find tents with fabrics and awnings. For this, it's therefore useful to design a paintbrush for weft.

Select a default Photoshop paintbrush and then draw a dotted line with different degrees of intensity in the stroke (Fig.25).

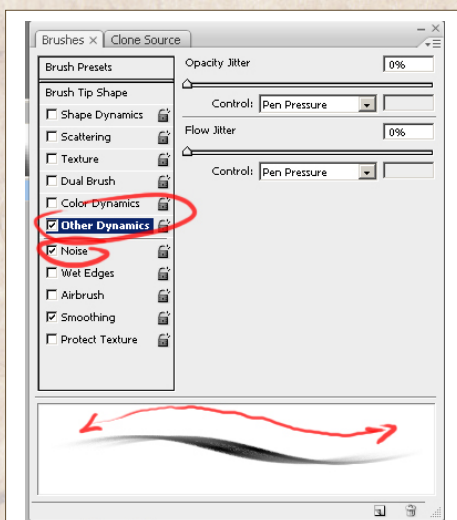


Fig.27

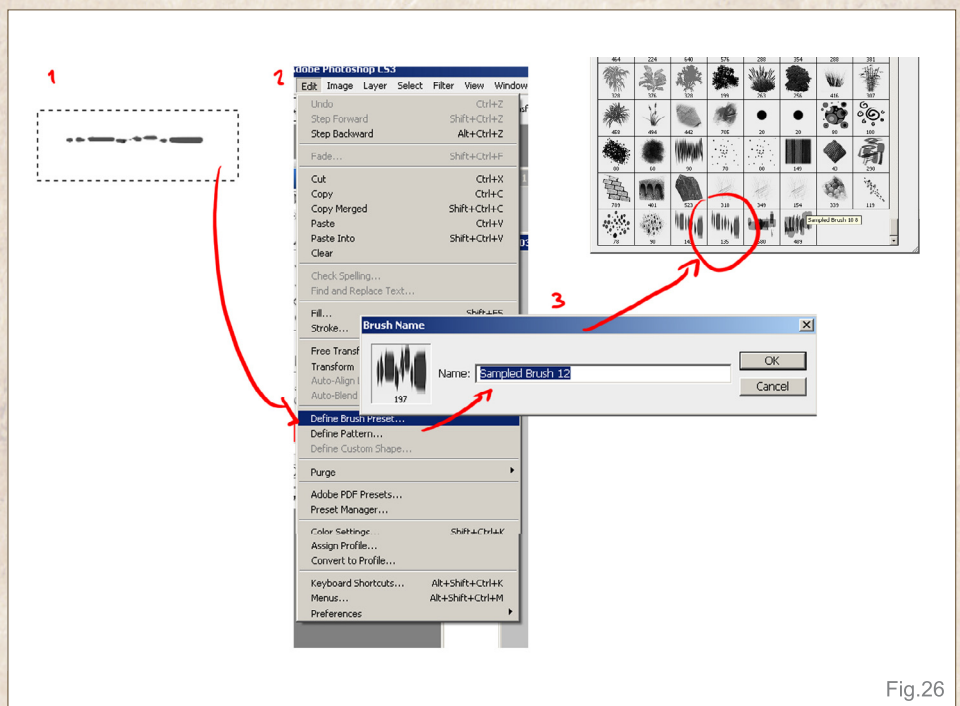


Fig.26

Select this line with the Lasso Tool to turn it into a paintbrush (don't forget to define your brush: Fig.26).

the ends. At the same time, give it a dirty texture (Fig.27).

Go to the Brushes menu, select Other Dynamics and tick the Noise option to make it smooth at

Trying the paintbrush out vertically on your canvas should help you to appreciate the effect of this brush (Fig.28).

Custom Brush No. 4

Finally, we'll design a paintbrush to emulate a real one! Select a default Photoshop paintbrush, and with small dots try to make what would be the bristles of a real paintbrush when pressed against paper. To create variations or different strokes, make larger and smaller dots, each one separated from the other. With a suitable shape defined, use the Lasso Tool to turn it into a brush, and define your brush present, as normal (Fig.29).

Once we have the paintbrush defined and stored inside our Brushes palette, tick the Other Dynamics option in your Brushes menu to get a beautiful horsehair type brush, ready to use. This paintbrush is useful for everything: people, backgrounds ... but, best of all, it makes you feel as if you're painting the traditional way (Fig.30)!

Although brushes are nothing but tools, they are funny and simple to make and use. They help us to get good quality results in a short time, because digital art simplifies the creation process. But I think that brushes must only be used when they are absolutely necessary, because otherwise they can cause you to lose

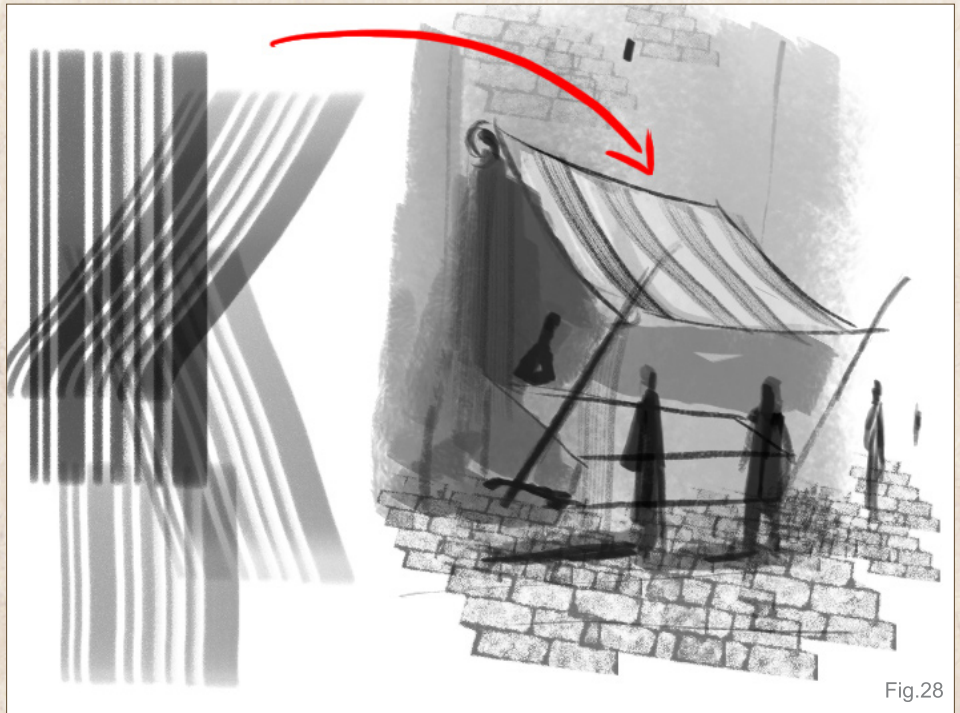


Fig.28

the challenge of art creation, and drawing becomes only a digital image with several textures applied.

Finally, to give your drawing a traditional painterly look, you can use a filter over it (Filter > Sharpen). And here we have the final painting (Fig.31). You could keep going and working your image to achieve a photographic representation of a city marketplace scene, but

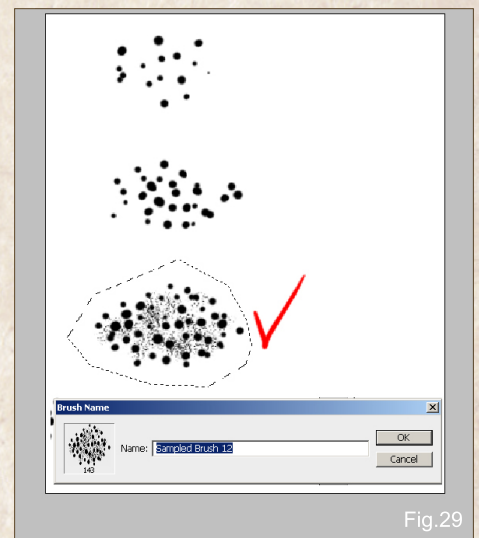


Fig.29

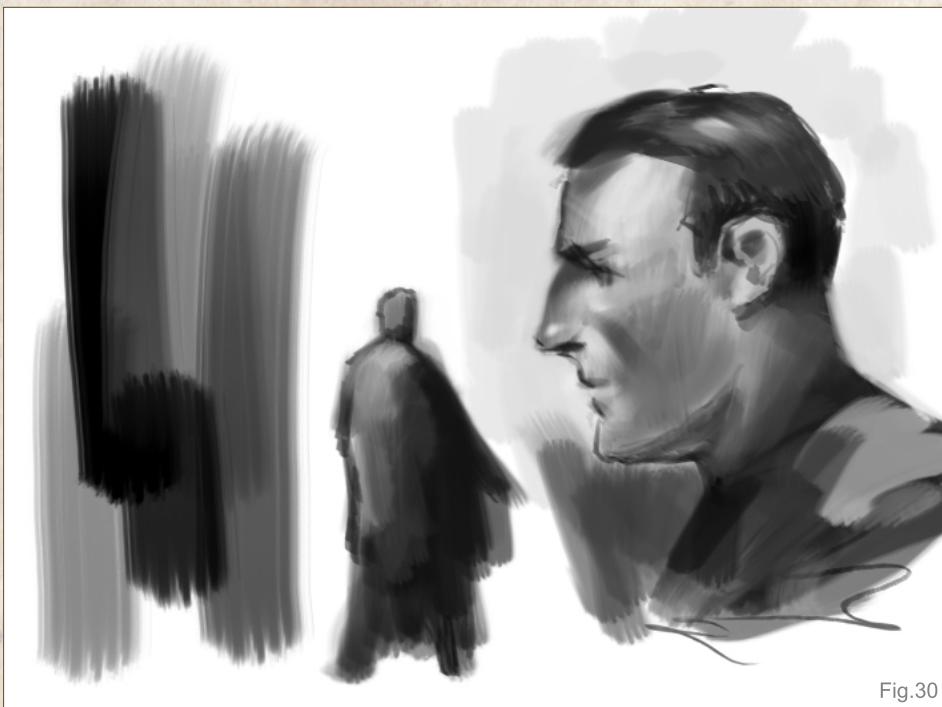


Fig.30

each of us knows when our work is done, and mine is now.

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Fig.31



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“When you look at a crowd it seems to be an almost indiscernible mesh of abstract marks and coloured dots.”

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CUSTOM BRUSHES

An artist's brushes have always been a vital part of any painter's set of tools, and remain the single asset that links paint with canvas. As such, they are crucial to how we view and interpret an artwork, and they afford the artist with a means through which to convey an idea or feeling. This has always been true throughout the history of art, and is no less important within a digital context. Software such as Photoshop and Painter essentially combine and fuse paint, canvas and brushes into a single tool. However, within this complex set of "tools", brushes retain certain autonomy with their own, distinct set of parameters and presets, offering artists the freedom to affect and vary the way paint is applied. This principle of customizing brushes forms the focus of this set of tutorials, and aims to show how individual artists exploit these techniques to achieve some interesting results!

Custom Brushes - Crowds

Software Used: Photoshop

Introduction

Custom brushes are a powerful part of Photoshop and form a particularly valuable asset amongst any digital artist's set of tools. These enable the artist to tailor his or her range of marks and brushstrokes, adding a new dimension to the work and injecting the canvas with a varied and rich dynamic.

Customizing brushes can help condense the physical qualities of a material or surface within a few deft strokes and therefore describe the subject matter in both an economical and yet highly effective manner. This technique can also save much time in the case of repeating a motif for example.

The subject matter in this image has been used as a vehicle for showing groupings in one form or another; in this case people, insects and birds. These off course can be painted individually but by customizing a brush we can create a complicated array in a matter of minutes as well as maintaining a plausible result.

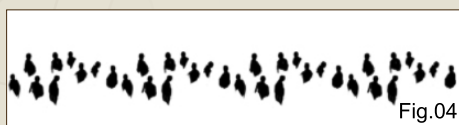


Fig.04

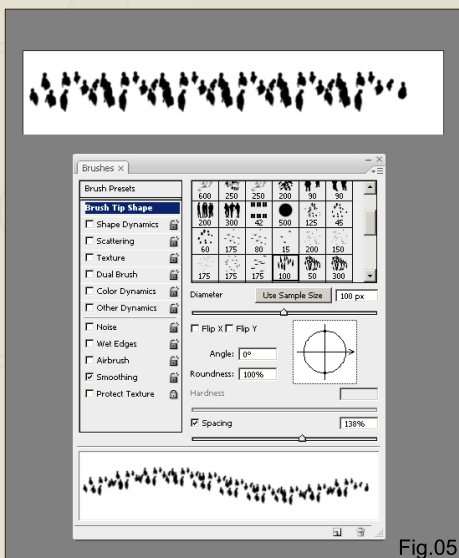


Fig.05

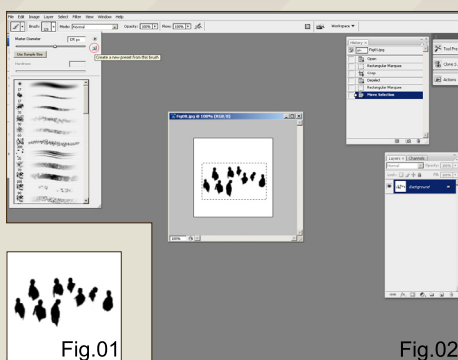


Fig.02

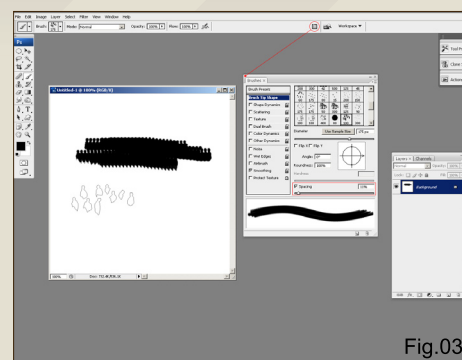


Fig.03

This is another practical aspect of Photoshop's brushes which allow specific brushes to be used to save time; something which is becoming ever more important in the quickening pace of today's art and design industry.

Crowds

To make this tutorial a little more interesting I thought it would be better to have a context for my custom brushes which in this instance revolve around the theme of crowding and flocking etc. I decided that as opposed to a very dry exercise focusing purely on the process of creating a brush, it would be more appropriate to use an actual scene.

The first brush I made centred on people and as this is probably the most obvious. As with all of my painting projects, my first port of call was the internet in search of reference pictures. Crowds are a challenging topic as there seems to be no apparent structure to them other than shoulders and heads and even these vary depending on the distance and angle from the viewer.

When you look at a crowd it seems to be an almost indiscernible mesh of abstract marks and coloured dots. The difficulty comes when you try to extrapolate a repetitive motif or shape that consistently describes what you are looking at.

I tried an abstract approach initially using a variety of shapes but in the end it simply looked like a pattern of different sized dots and nothing more. In the end I decided to start with what I knew, i.e. a shape representing the upper torso as seen in Fig.01.

It made sense to use a shape that looked correct and then use the brush parameters to create the random array of shapes visible in images of crowds.

Once you have made a template like this you need to save it as a brush in order to use it. To do this, open the Brush Preset Picker (small arrow next to brush tool) and then click on the small square icon in the upper right (Fig.02). This opens a dialogue box where you can name and save your brush. Once done it will appear at the base of your brush library within the brush presets.

When you select and use your brush it is likely it will not appear as you would wish and this is due to the default settings. To gain access to the brush parameters click on the small icon along the toolbar (ringed in red in Fig.03).

It may be that when you drag your brush along the canvas it will produce a solid line as seen in the left window. This is due to the Spacing within the Brush Tip Shape being set to low, 11% in this case.

Some of the settings will need to be modified in order to refine the brush and mean that it works the way it should which I will cover next.

Fig.04 shows the brush stamped four times using a mouse and the resultant pattern it makes without any alterations. I changed the Spacing under the Tip Shape to 138% which overlapped the strokes slightly (Fig.05).

I then flipped the X Jitter under Shape Dynamics to add a little variation (Fig.06).

I altered the settings under Scattering as seen in Fig.07 and that about finished the crowd brush.

When put into practice it resembles something similar to Fig.08. Obviously legs would need to be painted on the nearest figures or a brush created with the whole body for the extreme foreground.

The brush can be seen here in the final image (Fig.09).

Flocks

The next brush I wanted to create was one for painting flocks of birds which has become a very popular icon in both film and digital painting.

This is far simpler than the previous brush and the best way to start is to search for some photo reference of birds.

Make a selection area around the birds you wish to include in your brush and then fill them in with a pure black. Delete the surrounding areas just leaving the bird silhouettes as seen in Fig.10.

Save this out as a new brush and done previously and you will have a brush that now resembles your original pattern (Fig.11).

I altered the Shape Dynamics and Scattering to those parameters seen in Fig.12. The Roundness Jitter helps flatten a few birds out as though they are flying "side on" to the viewer and if you didn't want any to appear upside down you could turn of the Flip Y Jitter.

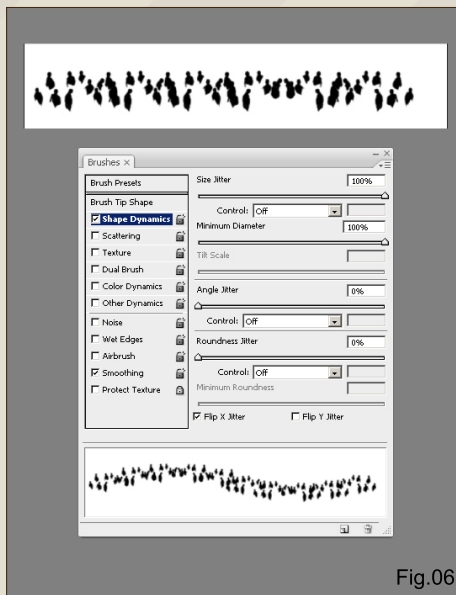


Fig.06

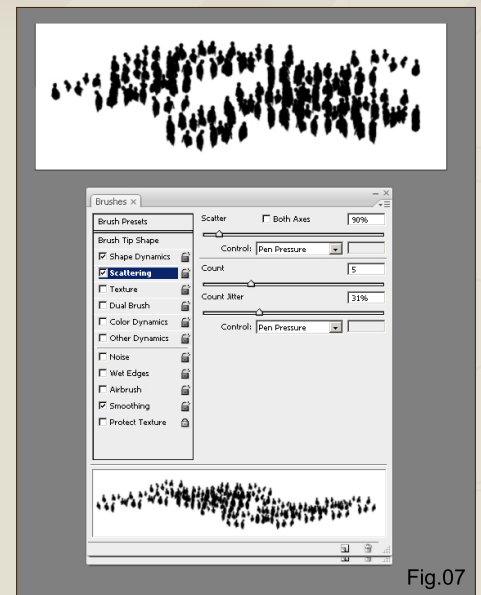


Fig.07

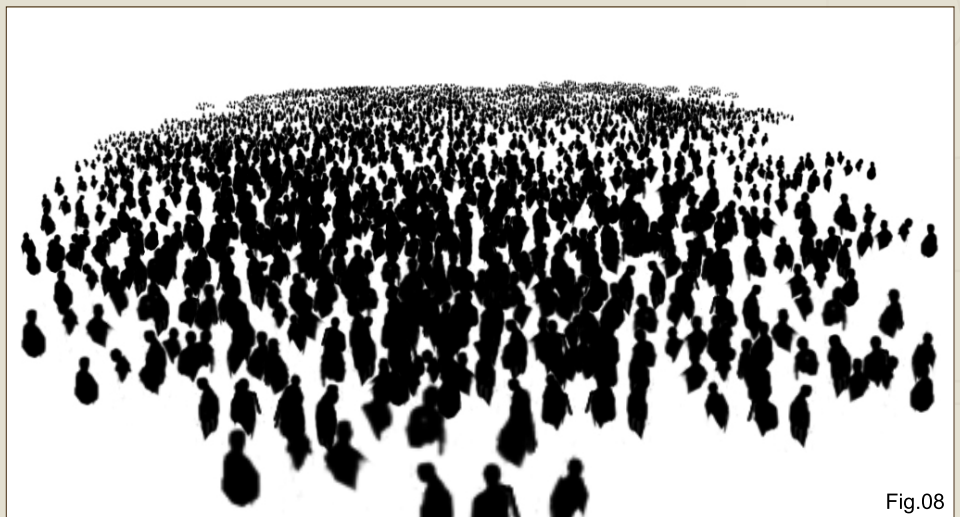


Fig.08



Fig.09

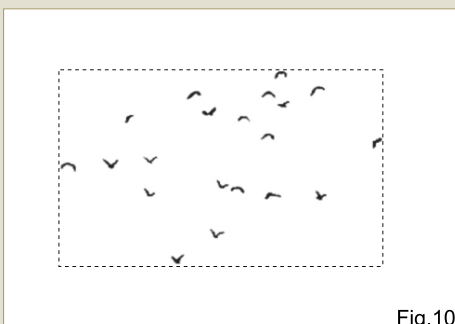


Fig.10

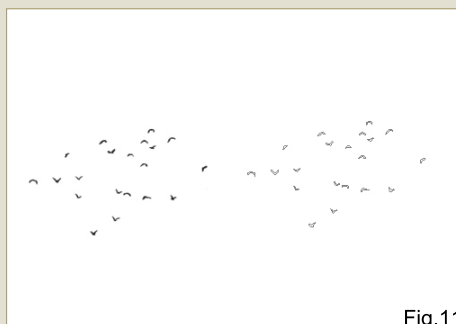


Fig.11

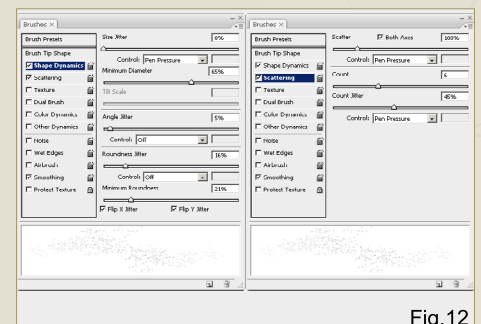


Fig.12

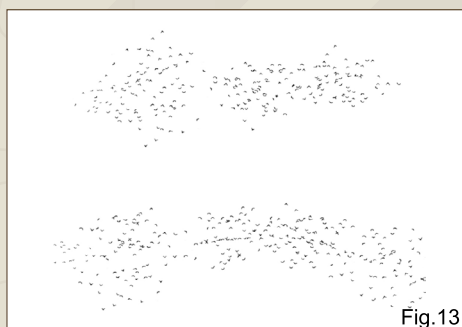


Fig.13

You can see these settings applied in **Fig.13** and how they add randomness to the two brush strokes. The final result can be seen here in **Fig.14** where you will notice a few birds are upside down but from a distance this reads ok.

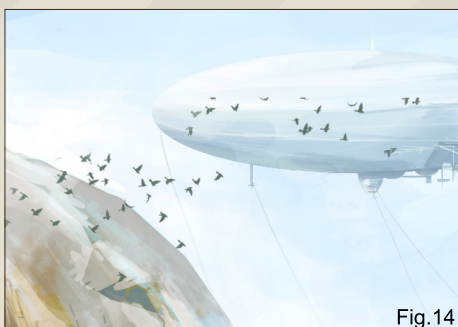


Fig.14

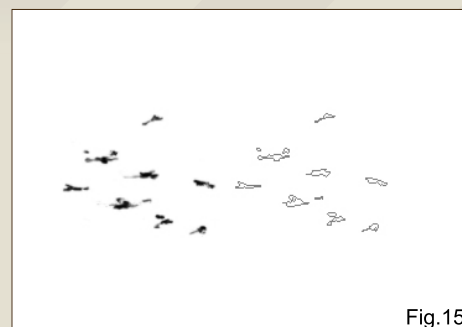


Fig.15

Swarms

Another brush I created was aimed at painting insects. I painted in a few abstract shapes that represented some sort of flying bug and then made this into a brush (**Fig.15**).

I then applied the following settings in order to paint a swarm (**Fig.16**).

Because the Brushes Palette is so versatile it is possible to create a handful of different brushes

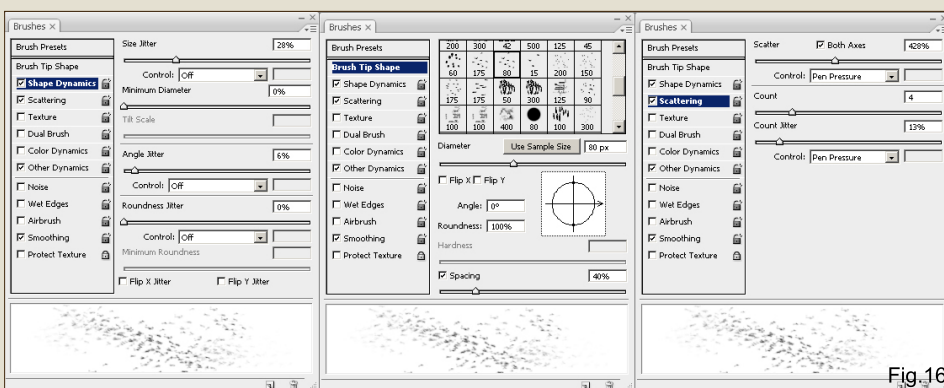


Fig.16

from a single template. I created a variation of this same brush using the following settings (**Fig.17**) which used itself as a Dual Brush (bottom right). With the Dual Brush applied you can see how it breaks up the brush strokes even more and creates a frenzied mass of bugs (**Fig.18**).

There was one other insect brush I made for this tutorial which would represent any bugs flying nearer to the viewer which can be seen in **Fig.19**.

I applied the settings seen in **Fig.20** which ensure that each stroke scatters the insects sufficiently. When a single stroke is dragged across the canvas the insect shapes cover a wide area as seen in **Fig.21**.

These three insect brushes have been used in the foreground right as seen in **Fig.22**.

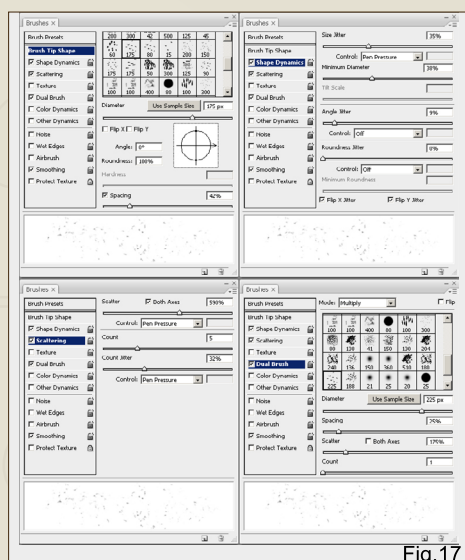


Fig.17

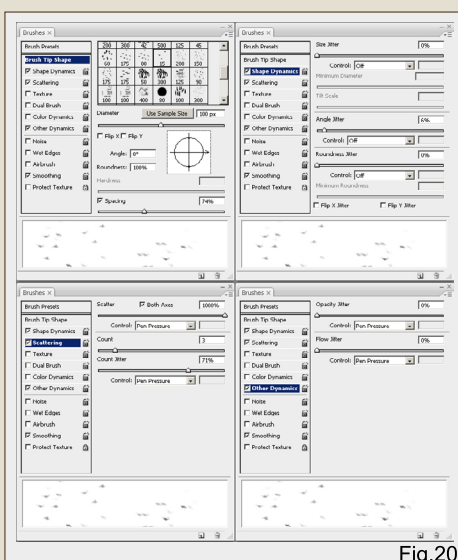


Fig.20

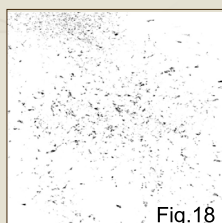


Fig.18

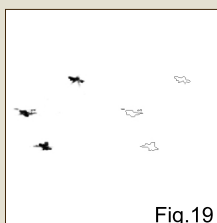


Fig.19



Fig.21



Fig.22

Conclusion

I hope that I have at least given you a glimpse into the usefulness of creating and customizing brushes. I feel that these tools are a valuable aspect of Photoshop and can enhance the quality of an artist's work as well as helping to improve on efficiency.



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Chapter 2 | Zombie

This character class has been made immortal through the films of George A. Romero. Types of zombies vary from the brain dead versions that seem to wander aimlessly through to the aggressive interpretation that stalks and hunts it's human prey with an athletic energy. This tutorial will take a common subject in the form of an average office worker and transform him into one of the undead.

Chapter 3 | Issue 050 Feb2010 | Werewolf

“The process of exploring ideas through thumbnails is a crucial part of the creative process and concepts nearly always require approval before embarking on a final design.”

PAINTING THE UNDEAD

This series of tutorials focuses on mythological and legendary characters and in particular the theme of the undead. It includes the two classic examples, most notably the vampire and zombie but also incorporates a werewolf which does occupy a very popular and unique place in modern myth. All of the above characters have featured heavily in both book and film contexts over the years as such have cemented themselves in history.

The tutorials cover the process of creating digital characters from the concept stage through to the final refinements. The value of thumbnail sketches and exploring variations on a theme will be covered as well as touching upon custom brushes and the power of Photoshop's blending modes which offer flexibility and freedom to edit the image throughout the design process. Each individual tutorial will take a slightly varied approach with regards to blocking in and color schemes and aim to show how Layers and blending modes can be manipulated to suit different attitudes.

Chapter 2 - Zombie

Software Used: Photoshop

Introduction

This character makes up the third and final part of this project and is perhaps the most familiar of the three having been the focus of many films and videogames in recent years.

This zombie in many people's eyes has probably been epitomised by the films of George A. Romero but it has been modified over time into a variety of guises. The word zombie refers to a "mindless" human being or someone who has been reanimated or brought back to life without speech or free will. There are different incarnations and some appear as slow lumbering creatures that wander around groaning whilst we have also seen in recent years a hybrid form that is quick, more aggressive and predatory in films such as "28 Days Later". As with the other two characters once you start to research the subject you find a great number of interpretations but the one contemporary common thread is that all are human with a need to attack other human beings by way of biting and thus spread their disease. This aspect has become part of the modern myth and popular culture and is somewhat removed from the original meaning of the word and its roots but is nevertheless a widely accepted convention within the modern entertainment industry today.

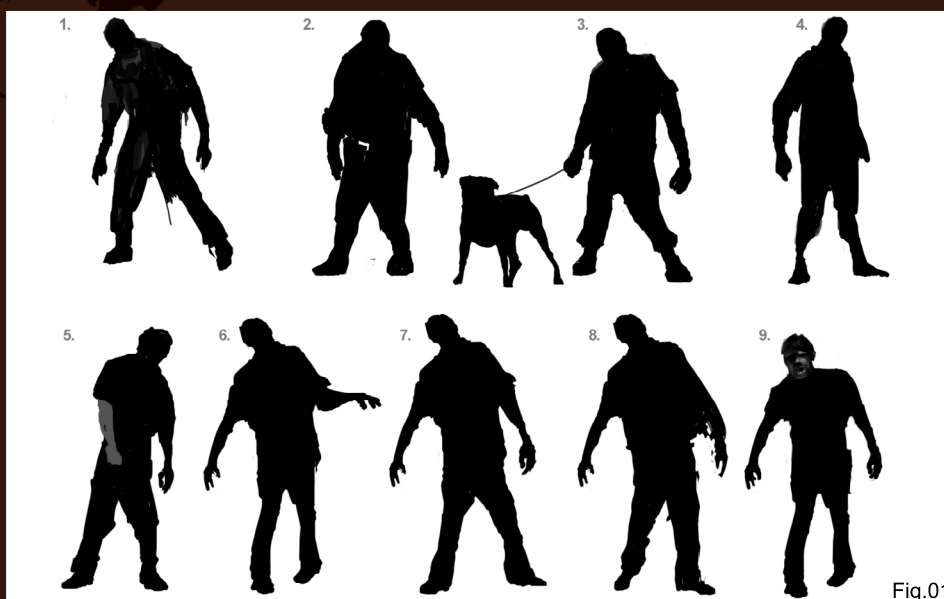


Fig.01

I decided that my zombie would be your average office worker that did not look unusual in any way and would be the slow, lumbering type as this quality felt strangely familiar from my days commuting in London in the mornings and being turfed out of pubs at closing time in the evenings! Over the years I have had plenty of inspiration for this subject from living in cities, believe me.

Thumbnail Sketches

As opposed to the previous two topics which portrayed non-humans this did not require quite as much imaginations as a zombie is human at least. What seemed to be more important was the posture as this would carry much of the personality and characteristics and suggest how he would move. Vampires and werewolves

have no distinct movement compared to the somewhat erratic gesticulations of the classically sluggish zombie and so it was important to come up with a pose that reflected this.

This type of problem is perfect for silhouette thumbnails and so this is where I began (Fig.01). Having an unbalanced posture with limbs being awkwardly positioned would help show an unstable walk and aspects such as a tilted head and misaligned shoulders also lend a suitable quality. The first four sketches incorporated hunched shoulders and tilted heads and I even considered including a zombie dog but none of these felt right. Sketch 6 was the first thumbnail that seemed ok and looked as though the character was having trouble walking and keeping his head upright. I liked his leg positions and left arm but his right arm did not look great and so I made three variations (7-9).

I decided that pose 6 would be the best starting point for the final design even though I was unhappy about the right arm but thought this could be resolved during the painting process where I could try out a few options.

With a solid idea about the pose I then decided to make a few portrait sketches to explore the type of expression and degree of disfigurement he would display (Fig.02). Having his mouth



Fig.02

agape as in sketch 1 looked more threatening but made him seem a bit too angry. It did suggest that his bite is used as a primary attack form but the expression was not right. I liked the notion of showing the teeth however so for sketch 2 I removed some of the flesh from around his mouth as well as the front part of the nose. I maintained the rolled back eyes from sketch 1 which suggested a dysfunctional brain or semi conscious state. The third sketch shows a well dressed man but with a different level of mutilation. One of his eyes is missing which I thought made him look scary as though he had been viscously attacked. I also transferred the left eye from sketch 1 which gave him an intense stare which I liked.

As was the case with the other characters, the final version here would be an amalgamation of all three as you will eventually see. The main reason for making these sketches is to try and give form to what are rather shapeless ideas in one's head. I do not think it necessary to fully resolve all of the creative issues at this point but if you can formulate a general direction then a number of the lesser decisions can be made along the route.

Blocking In

With a reasonable idea in mind I began the final version of the painting (**Fig.03**). In order to

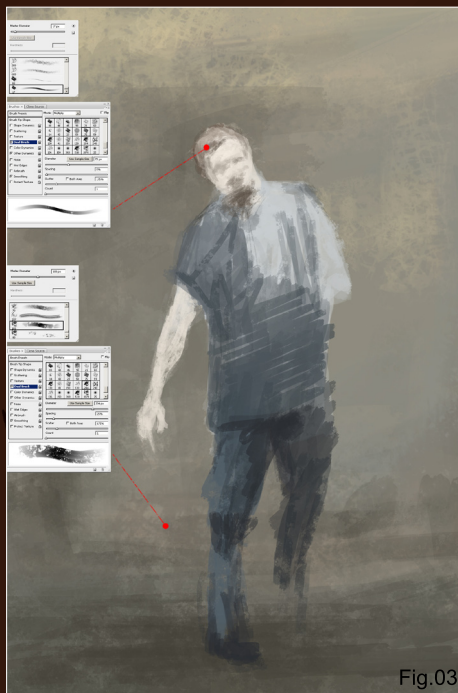


Fig.03

keep things consistent I used the same format as before by having a background layer and a separate layer for the character. However this time around I decided not to stick to a greyscale version with an overlay but instead use a color palette. You can see that I have used my two main brushes once again, one of which can be attributed to the background and one to the figure. I have taken pose 6 from fig01 but left out the problematic right arm for the time being.

I could have chosen to have his right arm missing but thought this would be a cheap



Fig.04

solution so decided to try having him reach out towards the viewer in a classic zombie posture which looked quite creepy (**Fig.04**). I also moved him up a little on the canvas to conform to the other portraits.

With the right arm in place I made a start on some of the gory details. I started to add some features to the head as well as use my custom blood brush for some stains and spatters (**Fig.05**).

At this point the head looked far from satisfactory, not least because the angle was wrong. I made a rough selection around the head and neck and then rotated it to the left after which I filled in the gaps and adjusted the features (**Fig.06**).

The head and features looked much more convincing after the alterations but his outfit resembled that of a surgeon more than a city worker – time for a change of clothes!

Unlike the previous characters all of this was being painted on a single layer and so in order to change the colour of his suit I made a general selection area around everything except his skin using the Lasso tool and then selected the quick

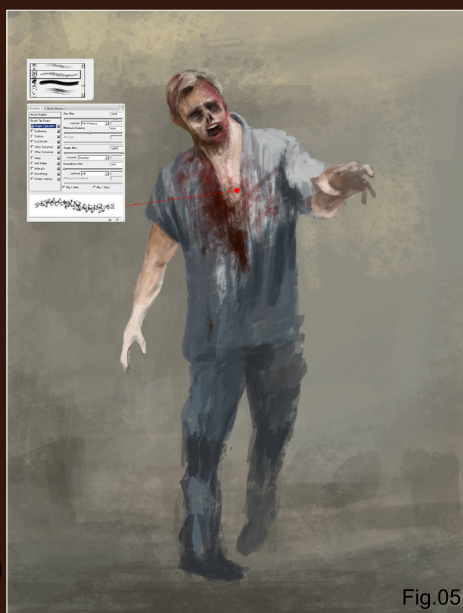


Fig.05



Fig.06

Painting the Undead

Chapter 2: Zombie

2d
artist

Mask Mode (highlighted in green in Fig.07). You can then use a brush to either add to the mask (using black) or subtract from it (using white) enabling you to precisely mask an area which is tinted red. With this done I then clicked on the Quick Mask button once again to return to standard selection mode and went to Image – Adjustments – Desaturate and turned his suit to a grey color.

Now the main problem with doing this, and why using separate layers for different components can be useful, is that by doing so will also desaturate the blood which is not what I want. Therefore to avoid this I first used the Magic Wand tool and selected the main areas of blood which were then copied and pasted onto a new layer before changing his clothing.

I now had the opportunity to alter the blending mode of the blood which actually looked much better as Overlay as it appeared less opaque and paint like and was now affected by the clothing beneath (Fig.08).

Having learnt from my mistake I added some extra blood but this time on a new layer (Fig.09). It is important to add some variation in the blood to show that it is very reflective when wet but also that it congeals and dries quickly. There are two dark spots on the shirt which are browner in color and suggest it is thicker here as well as a pale area on the left lapel which looks as though it has caught some light and has yet to fully dry (blue circle).

Building the Detail

The zombie by this stage has been fully blocked in along with a reasonable amount of detail but

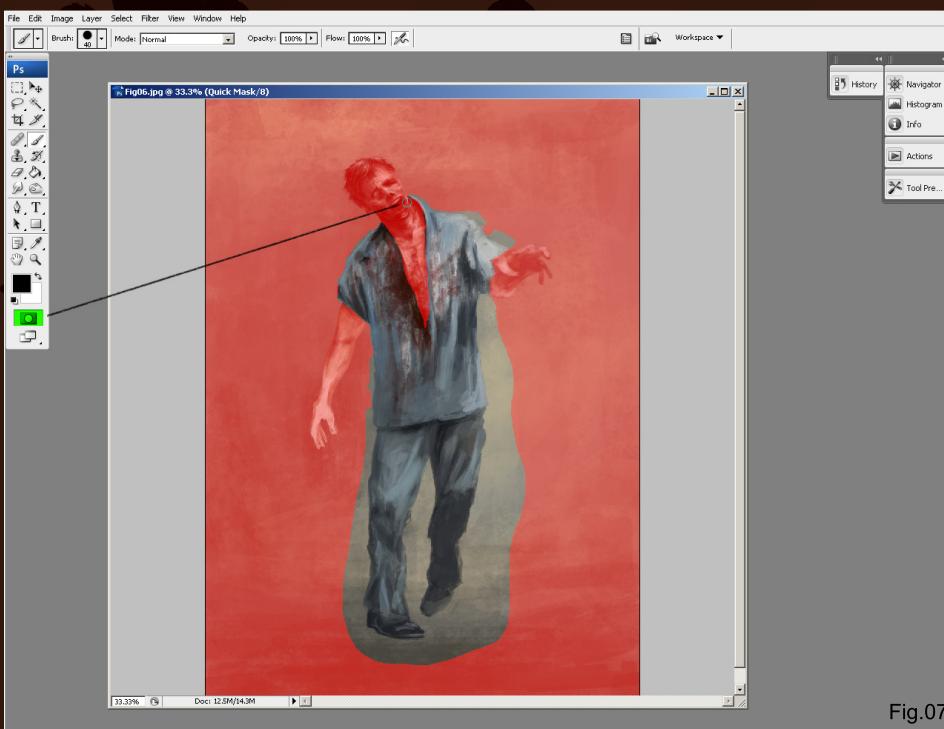


Fig.07



Fig.08

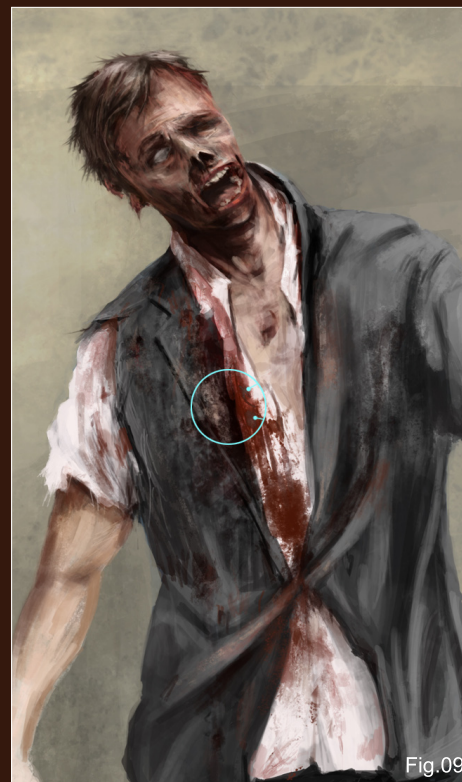


Fig.09

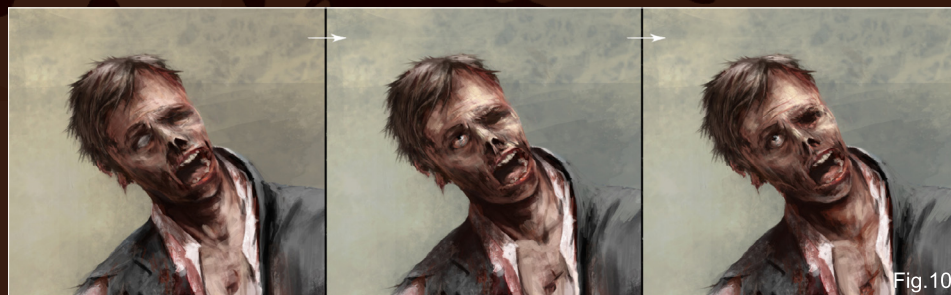


Fig.10

the face still lacked character. I liked the rolled back eyes in the thumbnail sketches in Fig.02 and the intensity of the right eye in sketch 3 so decided to combine the two (Fig.10).

I have also brought the jaw forward from the neck in the shadowed section and painted in some lighter highlights to help the eye socket

look more menacing and recede more. You will also notice I have tried a new background color as part of the ongoing process which is something worth experimenting with as your color scheme and tonal range changes.

I felt at this point that the character was developing nicely but in order to help emphasize the blood and make him look a little more like someone who had actually died he needed a different skin color. He looked a little too pink which would suit someone who had just died but I wanted to make him look more gruesome. I duplicated the character layer and then went to Image – Adjustments – Color balance and moved the slider towards yellow (inset 1 in Fig.11). I then used the Eraser tool to delete around most of the skin so as to leave the hair, parts of the face, suit and shirt unaltered. I could as an alternative have applied a New Layer Adjustment but this method was quite quick and easy ultimately. It proved useful to have a separate blood layer (see top of layers palette)

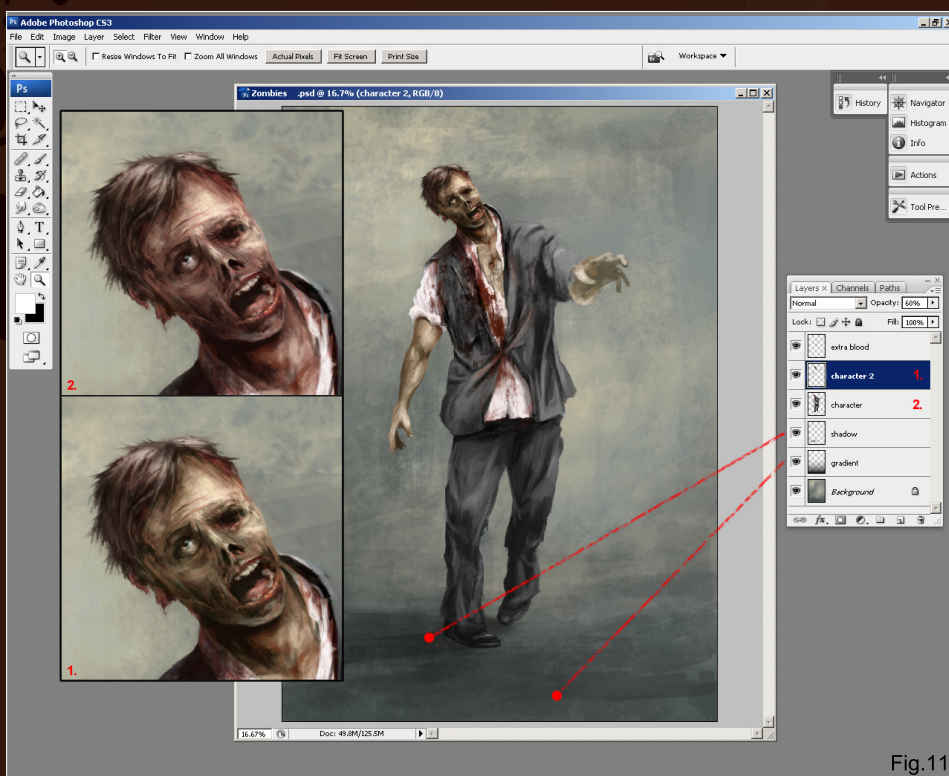


Fig.11

as this can remain unaffected. The two insets show the before (2) and after (1) effects with the result in the main picture.

In the Layers palette you will notice that I have added a shadow layer and a Gradient to darken the ground section. It was time to fix that right arm which was the main area lacking any definition. I decided to raise the arm to make him look more contorted and suggest he was more desperate to reach out to something or someone! (Fig.12).



Fig.12

I felt his new arm position added extra tension to the pose but when flipping the canvas horizontally he did seem to be leaning too far to the right overall as though he was about to fall. To rectify this I went to, Edit – Transform – Warp and adjusted his legs as I did with the werewolf in the previous chapter. You can see from the red guidelines how the posture has been modified which includes the angle of the left arm. Some smaller details which have also been added are the torn bottom of the shirt and sleeve as well as some further refinements to the suit.

With the second arm resolved, the painting was nearing completion but I felt he needed some more interest on his exposed and rather clean arm. I opted for a wound which was created on

Painting the Undead

Chapter 2: Zombie

2d
artist

a new layer in case I changed my mind (Fig.13). I thought that wrist needed an adjustment and so drew a selection area around the hand and went to, Edit – Transform – Rotate. Once done I “stitched” it back onto the arm by painting over the tears and making sure there were no gaps.

Final Adjustments

Whilst reducing the size of my canvas I noticed that he did not stand out clearly from the background as much as I should like and so used, Image – Adjustments – Curves to increase the contrast of the character. To compliment this I modified the background by playing off light against dark i.e. where the light hits the right side of the face the background is made darker and the section behind his left arm is lightened to bring the arm forward (Fig.14).

When you feel you have added all the details and flattened the image it is sometimes worth applying an Adjustment Layer of some kind to experiment with the colour scheme and mood as this can always be undone. I find Curves and Color balance are particularly useful and once applied there is always the option of painting into the mask to control the areas affected without destroying any of the final painting. One final stage which I often incorporate



Fig.13

particularly if the image is large scale is apply, Filter – Sharpen which essentially increases the contrast between pixels, making the image look clearer. You can see the final version of the image in Fig.15.

Conclusion

This not only concludes the zombie but this series of painting undead characters. It has been an interesting project due in no small part to the fact that I have never painted any of these characters before. The journey has inspired me to explore the topic further and see what designs and variations I can come up as all are iconic in their own right. Each has presented its

own set of challenges and as usual after any project there are a few minor things I would like to change but this is a given really.

All three paintings started out as a series of thumbnails but each has evolved to a degree during the final design which does keep the creative process fresh. I find it is important to let ones intuition suggest things along the way in order to inject a certain vitality and allow for happy accidents which can prove important.

The process of exploring ideas through thumbnails is a crucial part of the creative process and concepts nearly always require approval before embarking on a final design. However it is always worth having a little room to improvise if possible, without necessarily straying too far from the original design.

I hope through this tutorial you will have been able to see how the initial sketches have set the course for each of the characters and how elements from the numerous thumbnails have been incorporated and combined, as well as gaining an insight into my painting process and the business of character design.

Richard Tilbury

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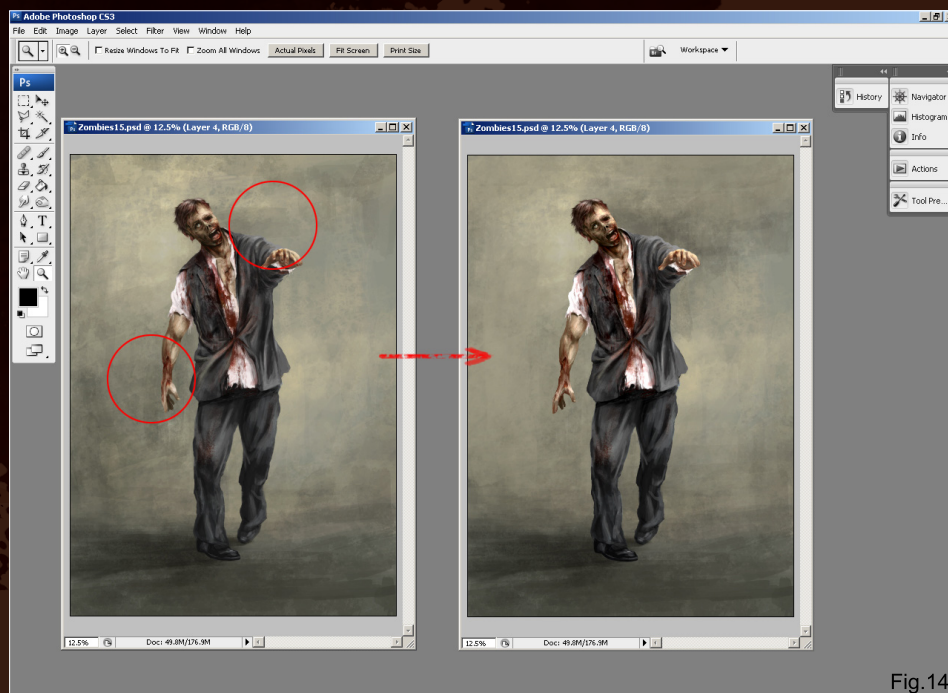


Fig.14





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PAINTING MONSTERS

“Wait until ideas begin to flow before reaching for your pen. Filling your head with ideas before you begin to draw will really help start the creative process and should mean your imagination is already whirring away”

This series of tutorials will be split over six separate chapters all of which will be dedicated to painting monsters suited to a range of habitats spanning jungle and aquatic to mountainous and subterranean. Each will be covered by a different author and will discuss their approach to digital /concept painting, the tools and brushes they employ and culminating in a final image. We shall gain an insight into the thought processes of each of our industry professionals and the ways in which they develop an idea from concept sketches through to a finished work. In particular we will be shown some of the considerations that are necessary to designing both imaginative and fantastic creatures that still remain plausible and abide by anatomical and evolutionary laws observed in nature.

Each tutorial will focus on a specific environment as its theme and therefore result in a varied collection of monster designs, providing a well rounded look into the world of the digital artist and the numerous tips and techniques used by proven individuals.

Chapter 1: Jungle

Software Used: Photoshop

Conceptualisation

There are many different ways to approach monster design. It's good to be familiar with as many different methods as possible, not only does this allow for greater versatility when selecting the appropriate solution for a particular design challenge, but employing a range of techniques helps to keep ideas fresh and the process fun.

Other than a jungle habitat nothing about this monster is predetermined. While the idea of having free reign with the design is appealing, such an open brief comes with one very significant challenge: where to begin? To solve this little problem, we'll look at a technique that will spark the imagination and quickly provide a variety of different options to explore.

Before picking up a pen, spend a little time getting into the mood. Refer to appropriate reference material and inspirational sources such as art, photography or even evocative music while you think your design over. Wait until ideas begin to flow before reaching for your pen. Filling your head with ideas before you begin to draw will really help start the creative process and should mean your imagination is already whirring away when the pen hits the paper.

Now the drawing can begin. Sketch out lots of quick doodles, keeping the lines as fast and free as possible. Details are not important at this stage, only basic shapes and proportions. Concentrate on the overall form of each creature as you draw. We want these drawings to be deliberately loose and spontaneous.

This approach is similar to the 'automatic drawing' employed by the surrealists, where the drawing hand is allowed to move across the surface of the paper in a random fashion in an



Fig.01

effort to tap into the subconscious mind. The human eye instinctively seeks to make sense out of chaotic shapes. The idea here is that encouraging random and accidental lines onto the canvas will help to suggest ideas that may not have been drawn deliberately. You can take this technique as far as you wish; completely random doodling can produce very interesting results and is a fun way to try and break a creative block but a more structured approach, inviting some chaos into deliberate sketching, is likely to yield more usable ideas. However it is employed, this is a very effective way to prompt new and unusual designs. Go crazy! (Fig.01)

Stop once you find ideas repeating and review your doodles. Set your imagination to work on each in turn, considering how they might look with different patterns, colours and materials applied to them. Try to make sense

of any chaotic lines – are they feathers, horns, tentacles, a trunk or something else? Which are most appealing visually? Do any suggest a story or particular behaviour? One or two will usually stand out right away - though they may not necessarily be the best or most rewarding choice - take time to explore each drawing thoroughly.

Try to justify the final decision. Just liking the way it looks is reason enough, but thinking through the reasons for making the choice will help give direction to the next stage of development – what appeals to you about your choice? How will you communicate that to your audience?

"I chose the creature in the top right. I liked the idea of a monster with cute proportions – balancing that juxtaposition should be a satisfying challenge as the design progresses.

The mixture of rounded and sharp shapes in this sketch also appealed to me and suggested a small, tree dwelling beastie which seems a practical choice for a jungle environment."

Development

The next step is to develop the creature doodle into a full concept design. A neutral symmetrical stance allows you to concentrate on making the anatomy work without having to solve any problems that may be caused by a difficult pose.

Begin by loosely defining the proportions of the creature then gradually begin to make sense of the shapes in the doodle. Make use of scale, rotate and distort tools to quickly experiment with different proportions (Fig.02).

With basic anatomy and proportions decided, add details. Again working against a neutral pose makes this easier. Use layers to quickly compare different ideas. Keeping shapes consistent within the design gives rhythm.



Fig.02

Remember why you chose this doodle as the starting point for your jungle monster, trying to retain and develop what appealed to you at that stage.

"I focused on the cute proportions which first drew me to this creature, the large eyes, head and ears. A long, thick tail exaggerates these proportions further. Spiky details – fangs, claws, tufts of fur – hint at a nasty side to the monster while also helping to tie all the shapes in the design together. The eyes will be a focal point of the design and are traditionally seen as windows to the soul, so it's here that I need to concentrate the marriage of cute and cruel that I want to show in my jungle monster."

(Fig.03 – 06)

Now consider the colours, patterns and textures of your monster. Again, layers can make changes and experimentation easier – set your sketch to 'multiply' mode and apply colour to a layer beneath it. Use colour adjustment tools to quickly see variations on your ideas. Try to make your development deliberate, ask yourself why your monster would have a particular color



Fig.03



Fig.04



Fig.05



Fig.06

or pattern. Is your design led by evolution – color for camouflage, courtship, or deception – or to satisfy criteria in your design – eyes as a focal point, contrast with background color – the choice is yours. Remember what justified your design choice – does that give reasons which influence your decision on color?

With a chosen color, your design is complete. Look back at your original doodle to see how it has developed. Have you built on the qualities that attracted you to the sketch?

“For my creature design to work as I intend, it’s important to get across aspects of both cute and nasty in my monster. I have chosen colors which I think will support this. To establish the eyes as a strong focal point, I have selected a saturated orange / red here – this is traditionally a color associated with danger or warning which should project the nasty side of my creation and will work well against green hues in a jungle setting. A neutral body color will give additional contrast to the eyes, and choosing a bright tone for the fur ensures good contrast with the background which will help to show off the cute body proportions. Accents on the tail add interest and help to maintain a consistent color theme within the design.”

Presentation

How will this freshly-designed monster be used? This will determine how best to present your creation. What you have at this point, perhaps with additional viewpoints and annotations may well be sufficient for a pure concept piece, but the design is only half the fun. Your jungle monster will be far more engaging, more alive, if you show it in a scene.

Composition

The first step is to decide on a pose and setting for your creature. Pose can communicate a great deal of your creature’s behaviour or personality. A background may not strictly be necessary when presenting a creature design, but the setting can be a powerful tool in

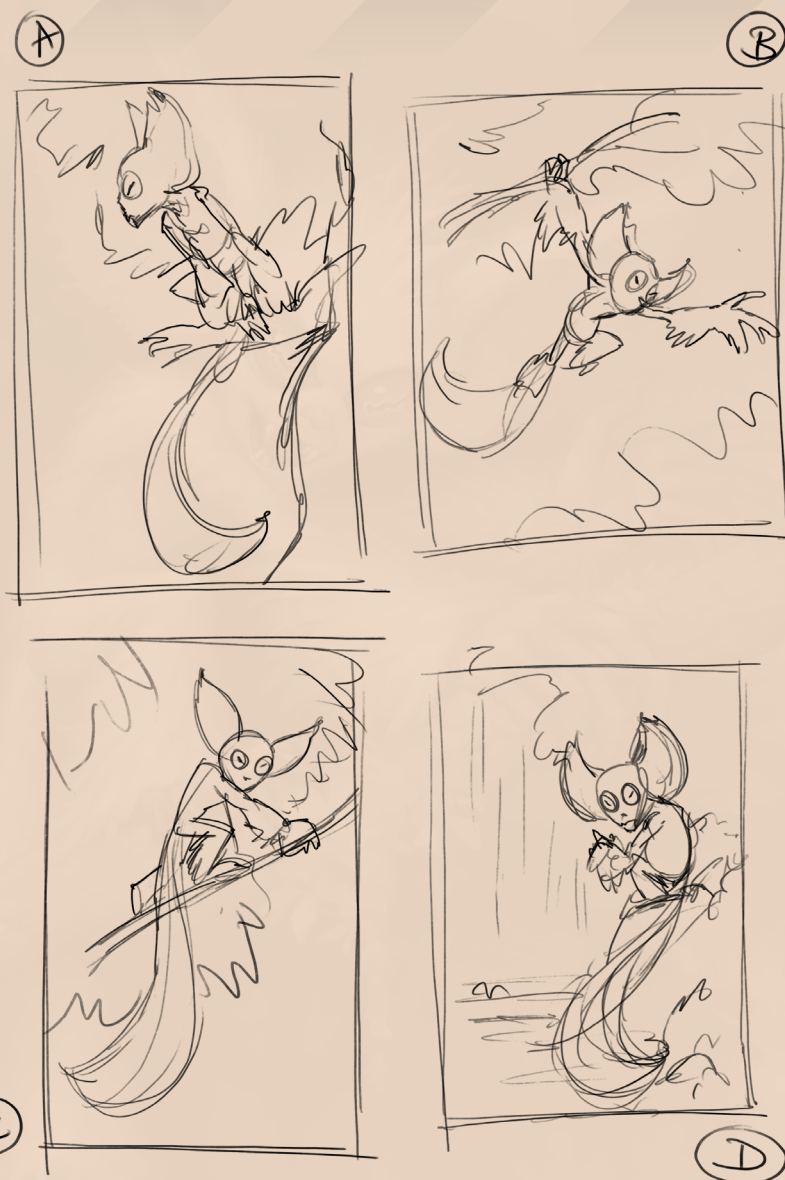


Fig.07

establishing the mood of the final piece. The development process should mean you’re now well acquainted with your creation – imagine the kind of things it would do and try to choose a pose which will tell the viewer something about your monster. Think about how it moves, what it eats and where it spends its time. Try getting into the character of your creature and act out movements. Though this may be amusing for any nearby spectators, it can be a very useful way to explore different poses quickly if you keep a large mirror where you work.

Consider a setting which supports a suitable mood for your creature. Hopefully this is something that was considered back in the

sketching stage. Jungle environments are rich and diverse; decide if a predictable background of green broad leaves or something more unusual suits your jungle monster best. Try to show scale by including objects or cues which will be familiar to the viewer (Fig.07).

Explore different ideas with loose thumbnail sketches. As in the doodle stage, keep things fast and free – not only will this repeat the possibility of accidental marks sparking new ideas, but loose sketches capture movement and energy very effectively.

“I have referred back to my original doodle for inspiration on the pose for my creature. It looks almost as if it’s been disturbed or startled which

I think adds to his character and suggests that it's engaged in some sinister behaviour which suits the mood I want to project. I intend to keep the background as simple as possible to show off the creature most effectively. The bough along which it creeps together with some surrounding foliage should give a good impression of the scale of my monster."

Sketch

To begin, build on your compositional thumbnail. Simply establish the basic pose and proportions of your creature along with any background elements. Lay everything out to make sure the arrangement of shapes in your composition is correct. If it works in this simple form, you can be confident that you have a solid foundation to build upon (Fig.08 – 09).

Now add details to your layout sketch. How far you take this depends on your colouring and painting technique and the complexity of your monster design, but it's important to have all the significant elements in place before you proceed to the next stage.



Fig.08



Fig.09

"Thumbnail C was my choice for the final painting. This was closest to my original doodle, though I modified the pose to make the creature appear more confident, less like it has been startled and more like it is about to pounce!"

Value

Next, establish values. Defining the values in your painting before working with colour allows you to control the contrast in your image more effectively and to consider form and the basic



Fig.10

behaviour of light more simply. Place your sketch on a separate layer set to 'multiply' mode, and lay in values on a layer below (Fig.10).

Begin with basic layout of flat values.

Establishing the basic arrangement of value is the only goal here, so keep things very simple (Fig.11).

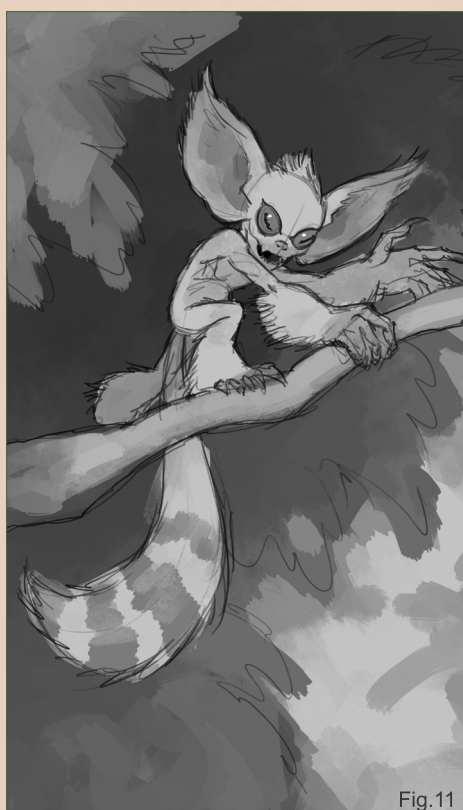


Fig.11



Fig.12

Add variation to the basic arrangement. Strengthen the contrast where dark and light values meet, and place any significant details. Try to keep forms flat at this stage. Decide where the darkest and lightest values in your image will be placed – be aware that these points will often establish the areas of highest contrast which will become a natural focal point (Fig.12).

Begin to add form to the shapes in you painting, and place any final details. Pay particular attention to edges at this point – soft surfaces should have soft edges, hard surfaces hard. Try to ensure all lines are removed in preparation for painting.

“My values are very simple. I designed my creature’s bright fur to contrast against the background, so I placed it against a shadowed area of foliage to make the most of this. The highest and lowest values are deliberately placed in my monster’s head to draw a strong focus to this area.”

Colour

Flatten the final value treatment, then copy it onto a new layer and again set to ‘multiply’ mode. Lay in basic colors on a layer below. It’s always best to work with a simple scheme, at least to begin with. No more than three or four main colors as a starting point. Begin by establishing the basic colors of your jungle monster as these are already decided, then choose complimentary colors to use in the background. Using a soft brush here will encourage colors to mix which can produce interesting results that you can carry through into your final painting. Different colors may be added on separate layers so that adjustments can be made more easily if necessary. (Fig.13)

The opacity of your value sketch layer may need to be reduced a little, especially if your values are strong, in order for the colors beneath to show through effectively. This is fine as the relative values remain consistent. A

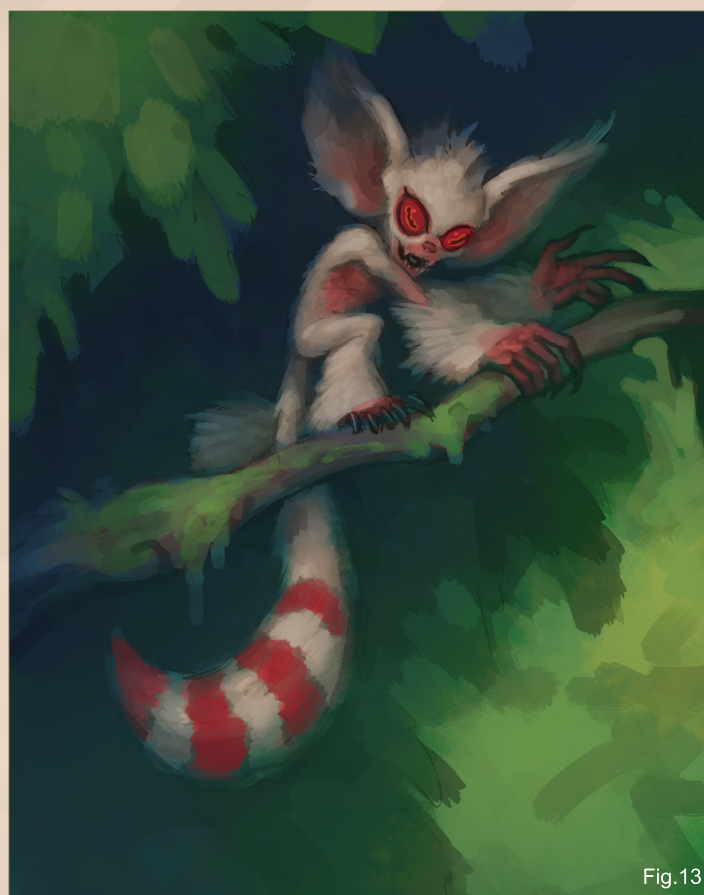


Fig.13

positive side effect of this is to reduce the strength of the very darkest and lightest values, which may then be re-established during rendering.



Fig.14

A good impression of the final image should be seen at this point. All the significant elements have been put in place and all that remains is to refine what is already there. This is a good opportunity to take stock before final painting begins. Note areas which could be problematic during the painting process or which don’t work as you intend and try to address them before you progress to the next stage. Similarly, take note of any areas which are particularly successful and make sure you don’t spoil them!

“I’ve chosen a basic color palette. A green background is a strong compliment to the saturated hues in my jungle monster and I’ve used a blue shadow to add interest to the scheme. The blue shadow and green foliage colors mix to create a bright teal hue where they mix. I like how this ties the colors together and I will aim to maintain that in the final painting.”

Render

Now the fun can really begin! Flatten the image and build on the coloured value sketch. At all times try and develop the image as a whole, rather than concentrating on small sections. Use the biggest brushes you feel comfortable with - this will force you to make bold marks and encourages the idea that each mark should be deliberate. (Fig.14)

At each stage of the render, try to build on what has gone before. In the previous section the colors were placed, use the colour picker to choose colors from the existing image and begin to refine your painting. Resist the temptation to add new colors at this point. Tidy any loose or messy areas and pay particular attention to edges and texture. (Fig.15)

Continue working across the image, making sure to balance the background elements with the foreground.

"Here I'm really feeling out the background of my painting. I want it to look like foliage, but I don't want it to draw attention away from my monster. My solution to this is to take an almost abstract approach to the background, defining rough shapes of leaves and plants without placing any details.

The goal is to give the impression what's in the background without having to show anything too specific." (Fig.16)

Now is a good time to flip and rotate your painting, this gives a fresh viewpoint on your image and can draw attention to problem areas. Fix any issues you can see. Continue to refine your work, strengthening values and adding detail as required. (Fig.17)



Fig.16



Fig.15

As the rendering process draws to a close, add any remaining details making sure to keep the tightest detail in and around focal areas.

Finishing touches

The rendering is complete. The final step is to add a few finishing touches. Pick out significant details with highlights, strengthen values to give the image plenty of contrast punch, make any final adjustments to the texture of surfaces. Image adjustment tools can be very powerful at this stage, but try to avoid getting bogged down

with tweaks and frills. If you've followed these steps correctly, you will have made deliberate, positive decisions about your creature design and presentation throughout the process and major adjustments at this stage should be unnecessary.

Your jungle monster is complete!

"In the final stage, I pushed some darker tones into the shadow area behind my creature and added further bright values to the fur. This

really boosted the contrast around the creature and gives the image a satisfying 'pop'. I drew further attention to the eyes by adding some subtle reflections which, along with hard, bright highlights make this area a very strong focal point. I also added some small details such as the skin texture in the ears, and some floating pollen in the background."

Critique and conclusion

Acknowledging that there will always be some aspect of your work that can be improved means that each piece you produce can be viewed as an opportunity to grow and refine your skills. Take a little time to look back at your work with a critical eye to see what may have been done differently and to review anything you feel you have learned from the piece. This is best done at least a few days after completing the work to give a better chance of casting an objective eye over the image. For a concept piece such as this, pay particular attention to the development of your ideas. Compare your first sketches against your final image. Does your finished creation remain true to your original concept? Does it successfully answer any design brief? Was the process smooth and deliberate? Do you like the end result?

"I'm generally pleased with my jungle monster. It's good to look back at the very first doodle which inspired this creature and see a direct connection with the final design. I think the design criteria, a quirky mix of cute and nasty, which I set myself is successfully met along with the intention of having the monster's eyes as a strong focal point. Perhaps the design could have been more original or unusual, though presenting a creature with some similarity to familiar animals (in this case a small primate such as a lemur or capuchin) can help the viewer to accept the design as plausible. The finished painting works as I hoped, I like how having small parts of the creature obscured behind the foliage and bough helps to give the impression of a secretive, skulking nature to the beast. Some elements, particularly the



Fig.17

monster's hands, could maybe stand out a little better but that might interfere with the strong focus on the eyes so I'm happy that there's a good balance to the picture overall."

Designing monsters is always fun. Hopefully the techniques that we have looked at in this example will have been interesting to explore and will prove useful in the future. Introducing an element of 'automatic drawing' into the early sketches is not always easy, especially if an

artist has been trained to produce neat and tidy drawings, but it's an approach worth persevering with even if it does not feel natural at first. Few other methods have the potential to produce such varied concept ideas as quickly as this, and remember that your unused ideas can be saved for possible future use!

If you've enjoyed the process, why not go back to your concept doodles and develop other monsters?

Matt Dixon

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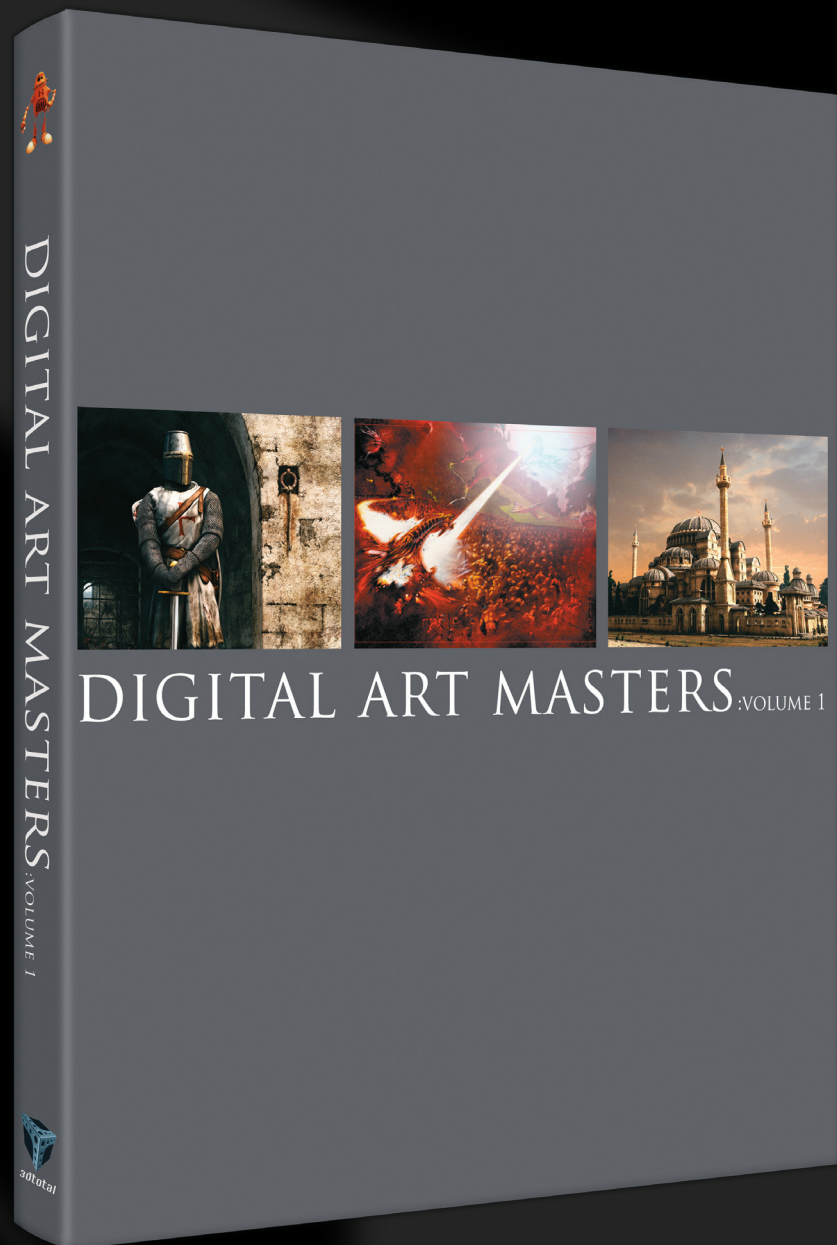


DIGITAL ART MASTERS

: VOLUME 1

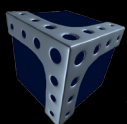
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“Having taken about 1,000 photos, and a lot of them in panoramic format, I had a lot of good reference material I could use to revive my memories.”

Peaceful Day

Making of By Andreas Rocha

Inspired by a recent holiday to Scotland, Andreas Rocha decided to create this beautiful scene, using his own reference photos and memories as a starting point.

Peaceful Day

Software Used: Photoshop

This year I went on a holiday to Scotland and I was completely blown away by its beauty. All that greenery is not something we see a lot here in Portugal, where the weather is sunnier and drier. Scotland also has an architectural patronage that makes you feel as if you're in a fantasy movie. Beautiful ruins in the middle of breathtaking mountains are not something you see everywhere. Basically, it was a dream trip!

So, when I returned home, my head was filled with ideas and I just wanted to start painting all these things that I had seen. Having taken about 1,000 photos, and a lot of them in panoramic format, I had a lot of good reference material that I could use to revive my memories. Two of the most striking things I saw were Glen Coe and Eilean Donan Castle. Look them up on the Internet and hopefully you will recognize my influences.

I started in Photoshop with a 4000px wide canvas. By starting with a resolution close to the final one you don't have to worry about blurred textures when upsampling. I also only used one



Fig.01

layer throughout the process to achieve a more painterly quality. Whenever I created a layer on top for adjustments I would soon flatten the image. I usually start in black and white as it gives me more control over composition, values and especially aerial perspective, something crucial in environments. Using some textured brushes I quickly painted in a landscape with some mountains to the left. I pasted in a photo of Eilean Donan Castle and painted over it. I didn't want to conform to its forms too early.

(Fig.01)

Next came the colouring phase. Everything was still quite rough and I just needed to get an

idea of the color scheme early on. Using layers in Color, Overlay and Softlight mode I used a large soft edged brush and introduced greens and blues trying not to over saturate the image. I also took care to reinforce the atmospheric perspective by tinting the mountains in the back with the sky colour. This application of color is mainly something I can use to evaluate in which direction I want to head. The final color scheme is quite different from this one. (Fig.02)

As I painted, the shapes became more defined and recognizable forms started to emerge.

Note, this is a slow process and you should continuously evaluate each step. I don't know



Fig.02



Fig.03

if my work process is the ideal one, but I never get from point A to point B in a straight line. Sometimes I have to retrace steps because the painting was going down the wrong path. For this stage I mostly used the chalk brush in Photoshop with opacity set to pen pressure. The tip was still quite large and I tried to focus on lighting and shapes without getting bogged down by the textural quality of the surfaces.

(Fig.03)

The painting had too much blue in it and was becoming too “cold”. The Photo Filter did the

job! However, I would later reintroduce some of the blues to balance the color harmony. I also started hinting at textures like the leaves in the trees and the stone walls in the building. I tried to paint these rather than use textured brushes that closely resembled these surfaces, as I believe this gives the painting more character.

(Fig.04)

The image lacked depth and seemed as it was composed of 2D planes that simply overlapped. I erased some of the trees in the foreground and introduced a path leading to the castle.

The bridge was also the first hint to the river that I would be introducing. As you can see, the process was not linear and elements were erased and added during the painting process.

(Fig.05)

In this step I made two major changes. I flipped the canvas and introduced a river. This would allow the viewer's eyes to focus on the castle first and then explore the expanse to the right. Using the Hue/Saturation Filter and confining the effect to the upper part I changed the pink hues from the sky to a more natural blue. Finally



Fig.04



Fig.05

I added details like the windows and the rock to the right. (Fig.06)

Even in advanced or final stages don't be afraid to make major changes. Digital painting is very permissive and ideal to make these kinds of adjustments. In two separate steps I lasso-selected the building and the river and shifted them to the right to balance the composition. I also subdued the detail in parts where I didn't want to lead the eye, like the tree to the left and the rock in the corner. For this stage I mostly

used Corel Painter's Palette Knife and Blender brushes. (Fig.07)

I finished of the painting by making both some overall and some localized color and value adjustments. The filters I use most are Levels, Hue/Saturation and Color Balance. I made the whole image a little bit murky by shifting the greens to desaturated browns. A final step was to apply a Smart Sharpen filter to accentuate the underlying brushwork. Don't underestimate this step as it can really make a difference.

Well, I hope you enjoyed this tutorial and if you have the opportunity to visit Scotland don't miss out on it. Trust me!

Andreas Rocha

For more from this artist visit:
<http://www.andreasrocha.com/>
Or contact:
rocha.andreas@gmail.com



Fig.06





A.ROCHA
2009

Fig.07

DIGITAL ART MASTERS VOLUME 4

With the release of 3DTotol's latest book, *Digital Art Masters: Volume 4*, we have some exclusive chapters for you...

This book is more than just an artwork book. Not only does it feature full-colour, full-page images, but each artist has given a detailed description, in their own words, of the creation process behind each piece of published artwork. And they've done it especially for this book!

This month we feature:

"20.000 Miles Lost"
Blaz Porenta





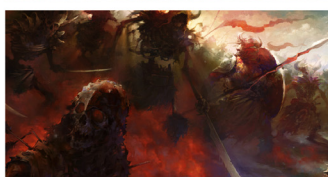
The following shots of the “20.000 Miles Lost” book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...



download from various artists' web pages. I would like to give credit here to the artists known as Goro, mlg and Barontieri for their brush packs, which I use most often and throughout all of my works.

At the end of every painting, when the rendering process is sort of finished (Fig.9a - c), I start playing with textures and adding some of the last touches. For textures I often use different photos of rust and dirt, sometimes scanned acrylic brushstrokes, and overlay them on the painting. Every texture I place in is carefully chosen and refined on parts that don't enrich the basic image.

Lately I've also experimented a lot with Photoshop's Bas Relief filter, which adds some sort of depth to brushstrokes (Fig.10). This filter, as well as texture layering, mustn't be overused, as it easily becomes cheesy if visible too much or shown in the wrong places.



After texturing, it was time for those final touches, slight color corrections and last moment details, such as adding mist, dust particles and snowflakes – something which will tie the whole piece together and make it work as a whole, as well making it more believable (Fig.11a - b).

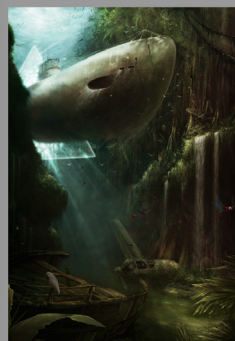
CONCLUSION

I wish my tight schedule would allow me to spend more time working on pieces like this one; to just kick back and relax, paint without any stress of being late for deadlines or changing everything just because a client isn't a big fan of the color blue. But at least this way I can appreciate those rare moments even more.

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